TROLLEY FOLLY

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HENRY WALLACE PHILLIPS

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TROLLEY FOLLY

Jimmie escorted her, carrying her basket. Page 20

TROLLEY FOLLY

By

HENRY WALLACE PHILLIPS

Author of

RED SAUNDERS

THE MASCOT OF SWEET BRIAR GULCH

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TROLLEY FOLLY

TROLLEY FOLLY

JIMMIE HORGAN'S FORETASTE OF FORTUNE

IT was a splendid office—mahogany, plate-glass windows and all that pertains to the uninteresting side of respectability. There was a lawyer there, sitting before his desk—a crisp, gray sort of lawyer, who looked as if when you patted him gently he would snap a finger off. One Jimmie Horgan was also there.

Now, Jimmie was a careless youth, and a cheerful habit of sending people scattering, acquired by managing the controller in the employment of the Suburban Trolley Company, gave him what might be called a cynicobenevolent view of life. He had learned

that the human body was an unreliable vessel to hold so great a thing as a soul.

One bunt from his trusty car, and the greatest alderman who ever received boodle for that same franchise promptly departed for Heaven, or its suburban districts.

He had made the proud to skip ahead; ladies, that one would not suspect of either agility or pliability, had made creditable running-long-jumps merely because Jimmie did not twist the brake. Bankers, plutocrats and plumbers instantly dropped their accustomed airs of superiority and hiked out-of-that when Jimmie's foot trod the gong. This showed him clearly that at heart all men were simple. The airs assumed were but a mask, concealing a real desire to please.

Jimmie may have belonged to one of the first families of Ireland, but his estate had fallen low—so low, in fact, that he held in his hand the incredible, and now, away from

his platform of authority, he needs must tell the intrenched lawyer-man a strange tale.

Strong of heart was Jimmie. He rallied.

"Your name Simmonds?" he asked, with a grimy thumb indicating the signature on the letter he extended for the lawyer's inspection.

"Yes, sir," barked the lawyer with severity.

"Who gave you that name?" inquired Jimmie in a spirit of levity.

"What is that?" returned the lawyer.

Jimmie recalled himself to his position. "Oh," said he, "I want to know whether this thing is a fake or not."

The lawyer extended a hand like a rat-trap, and snapped the letter toward him.

"Certainly not," he said with decision. "Certainly not. You have been left, through his dying intestate, by your maternal uncle, the sum of five thousand dollars, as I have acquainted you in this letter."

The lawyer coughed the cough of conse-

quence. "This amount is in my care; in fact, it is deposited in my bank, awaiting your orders."

Jimmie leaned heavily on the office-boy to support himself.

"You don't look it," he said to the lawyer, "but are you addicted to the use and abuse of strong things of any kind?"

"Sir!" said the lawyer.

"I slipped my trolley," said Jimmie. "I didn't know I had any maternal uncle. I didn't know he had five thousand dollars. I don't know where he got it, and I don't know where I am, nor why you are here, nor anything else." He roused himself. "Say," said he, "if you ain't got me down here to enjoy my looks, produce."

"Hey?" said the lawyer.

"Yes," said Jimmie, "just that. Hay; make it while the sun shines. Clear weather to-day. I don't savvy this thing, up nor

down. You let me have two hundred dollars, and it will look like business. All I want to do is to feel it. I have been trying to feel two hundred dollars for three years, and the nearest I have got to it is on the instalment plan."

The lawyer pushed him a book.

"Make out a check," said he.

Jimmie swallowed all the air in the room, but yet made out the check.

The lawyer looked at the check in the most detached fashion, called a man and handed him the slip of paper. The man seemed weary. He took the piece of paper, walked toward an actual safe, opened a drawer with a real key and pulled out from its secret hiding-place a bunch, or, as it seemed to Jimmie, a whole head, of that tender, crisp, succulent plant, the long green.

With a wet thumb the weary man shredded off a certain number of leaves, and, showing

disgust of life in every feature, placed them on the lawyer's desk. The lawyer eyed them glumly, wrapped them up with a practised hand, and shoved them to Jimmie.

"There you are, sir," he said. "Anything else?"

"No," said Jimmie dreamily. "No, nothing else."

He turned away, bumped into the partition, begged its pardon most humbly; walked into a young woman who was approaching with a basketful of letters; distributed wisdom all over the office; got spoken to plainly; tried to help the young woman collect the flying sheets, and got spoken to still more sharply; slid down the first four steps outside, landed in the street in some fashion, and then galloped toward a sign indicative of a life-saving station.

After safely embarking on a schooner he retired to a corner and examined the ten

promises of our government for twenty dollars per promise, at leisure. They were so. Boldly he slapped one upon the bar. Doubtfully the barkeeper opened his cash-drawer.

"No good," thought Jimmie, thinking this an act of suspicion. But it was not.

"Say, young feller," said the barkeeper, "it's pretty early in the day to clean me out of change. Ain't you got nothing smaller than that?"

From its lonesome abiding-place at the bottom of a pocket filled with tobacco-dust, Jimmie fished out a quarter—that one piece of Mr. Bryan's philosophy which he had imagined to be all that stood between him and a joyless wait for pay-day.

"All right," said he.

This proof that it was inability and not contempt that had shown in the barkeeper's eyes burned in James' heart like a little flame. He took out one twenty-dollar bill and put it

in a separate pocket. Twenty dollars he could understand.

He then made for the barns, wondering what man it was whose legs carried him so jauntily.

This was the beginning of the great mystery—the disappearance of Car 809.

How so large and eminently practical a thing as a trolley car—a thing so blatantly modern and, withal, so hard and heavy—could vanish from the face of the earth, and leave neither track nor rack behind, was a problem that caused silver threads to appear amid the gold and bald spots of the officers of the Suburban Trolley Company.

With it went the motorman and conductor; gone; vanished; vamoosed; dissipated into thin air.

The thing was, and then it was not. That is all they ever knew about it. The facts are these:

When James arrived in the yard he approached his running-mate and poked him in the chest with a dramatic forefinger. The running-mate looked at the forefinger and then at James.

"Changed your spots again?" he inquired.

"Nup," said James, hitting himself mightily upon the chest. "Here is Willie Wally Astor, and that's me."

"Grounded again?" sniffed the conductor. "Where do you feel it worst?"

"There ain't any worst," said Jimmie. "You come here!"—and he seized him by the collar.

"Leggo!" said the conductor, but at the same time permitting himself to be jammed into a corner while the golden tale of sudden wealth was poured into his ears.

"Ah, g'wan!"—but the tones grew weaker and weaker, and when Jimmie produced his little pamphlet on high finance, printed in

green—proof to any eye—the conductor fell upon his neck.

"I allus knew you was the kind of a little bird that could fly if you drew them feet off the ground," he said. "Call the turn."

"We have got fifteen minutes," said Jimmie. "Here we go fresh across the street to celebrate."

At this period the minds of both these worthy men were clear and free from any further operation than that natural to taking a drink, but after that first drink, and with the confidence, bred of another, to believe in that money, James' mind extended itself. He pounded the bar with his fist.

"I am dead sick and tired of going over the same old streets," said he. "It occurs to me at times that I'll have to turn off som'ers, or bust."

"Yep," assented the conductor; "that's right, too. All the time the same streets; all

the time the same old dog that comes just so near getting pinched; all the time the same fat man waving his umbrell'; all the time the same Dagoes with gunnysacks filled with something, and smelling with a strong Italian accent; all the time the same war over that transfer, after that same young lady has traveled half a mile beyond where she ought to have got off. If I had another drink I could feel very bad about this."

"Let's," said Jimmie. So the conductor felt very bad about it, and Jimmie, like the good friend he was, felt worse.

"Yes, sir," said he, "I just naturally will have to turn off som'ers, or I surely *will* bust."

There gleamed a radiance from the crisp array before the mirror. Genius had hit Jimmie—hypnotic.

"Say, Tommie," said he, "we *will* turn off som'ers. If you'll go me on it we'll take the

old ambulance clear to the end of everything in sight this morning. There is more than forty thousand switches we'd oughter took long ago, and they can't stop us. If we get our jobs excused away from us we c'n lean up against that five thousand until we are rested. Come along," said he, inspiration working. "Come on, old man!"

"Say," said the conductor, "I've got you faded. I don't care if I never work again, and as for jerking a piece of common clothesline every time a person with a mind to shoves one small nickel into my hand, why, I am really tired of it. I have had idees of a nobler life than this, Jimmie. They usually come after the sixth round, but when I think of that five thousand—" He stopped abruptly.

They grabbed each other and made for the yard.

"Come on, you fellers!" yelled the starter. "Get a wiggle on. Youse are due now."

"Comin', uncle!" said Jimmie, in a sharp falsetto.

"Slowly comin'!" boomed the conductor.

"Ain't you got a gayness, though?" said the starter.

The motorman elaborately placed one silver dollar in the hands of the starter and closed the latter's fingers upon it.

"Keep this," he said, from many years' experience of viewing the hero leaving the lady of his choice with a sob in the orchestra. "Keep this," he repeated waveringly, quaveringly and tenderly. "Do the same by yourself. This is a sooveniret of something you never heard of before."

The starter looked startled. "Well!" said he. It was the only word in the English language that could express his feelings.

"Well!" he said. He looked at the dollar, and in the tone of a man bewitched he cried, "Give him the bell, Tommie! You're off!"

Tommie pulled the strap. "Adoo! Fare thee well. Good-by. Ready!" he called. "If we don't see you again, hello!"

The starter waved his hand. The starter shook his head.

Car 809 droned merrily along the track until she came to the first switch. "Give us the High Bush Line, Jerry," said James.

The melancholy man jabbed his iron into the track. High Bush, North Pole, Heaven or Hades, it was all one to him.

"Come along," he growled, and they came.

"Hey, there! Hey!" cried an excitable old gentleman, as the car shot up the side-street switch. "I thought this car went through Lethe Street."

"It used to," answered Tommie soothingly, "but it has got weary of it—plumb tired out."

"Tired?" cried the old gentleman blankly. "Here, let me out!" he concluded with energy.

He stood on the crossing until a brewery-wagon was driven against him.

"Lunatics—not a doubt of it," he said to himself, as he hopped to the sidewalk. There he waited, but in vain, for no other car would be sent forth until 809 passed a certain turnout, which she had not the least intention of approaching this day.

And that ruptured the schedule.

A sour-faced young man with a fighting jaw approached the car a few blocks farther on.

"Say! Do youse go through Scrabble-grass Avenoo?" he asked in a voice like a curse.

"Now, that depends," answered the blithe Thomas. "If we want to, we will; if we don't, we won't. D'yer feel like making it an object to us?"

The sour-faced young man backed up a step.

"Say, you are a pretty fresh duck, ain't you?" he sneered. He quickly put on his most ferocious look. "Now, you listen to the toot of my little naughtyobilious horn," said he; "and if you don't I'll mix you up with the machinery. I want to go to Scrabblegrass Avenoo. D'yer get that? The quicker I get there, the better. D'yer get that?" He pushed his bulldog jaw into Thomas' face.

"Shoo, fly!" said Thomas, making a light pass with his hand which caused a noisy rustle in the aftermath that grew upon the other man's extensive face.

"Sure!" he continued. "Sure. I get all these things, of course." He stopped the car. He took the fighting-jawed man by the shoulder and pointed his finger at an angle of

thirty-five degrees to the perpendicular and at right angles to the car track.

"There is Scrabblegrass Avenoo, right over yonder," he said. "Jump!"

Sometimes a fighting jaw merely implies a fighting character: it doesn't insist upon it.

"D'yer mean I have got to walk?" asked the sour-faced man.

"Sure thing," said Tommie, "or else you'd like to have me kick you half-way there?"

"Say, what's got into you this mornin'?" gasped the stranger.

It was Tommie's turn to scoff. He reached for the strap, smiling derisively.

"You ought to read the papers," said he; "then you wouldn't act like such a lobster. Things ain't run like they used to be, my friend; me and my partner has bought this car, and we're running it around, getting custom where we can."

"Ain't there no more railroad company?" said the lost soul confronting him.

"Nope," answered Tommie with a yawn. "The hull trolley business is in the hands of private parties like us—and we're losing money on you by the second. Skip!"

From this on, 809 developed more eccentricities of character. Sometimes she stopped for passengers like a perfectly normal trolley car, but if Jimmie did not like the looks of people as they drew near she bounded ahead like an antelope, when the foot of habit was reaching for her step. Then, at a place of pleasant greenery, refreshing to the city eye, she often moved up and down the block several times while her managers enjoyed the change of scene. This attracted some attention.

They always slowed the car fully to explain to the out-landers the strange, new conditions existing in the trolley world.

The passengers made no complaint. It is so much the custom for the free American to accept almost anything in uniform as a part of Nature, and a Nature that grows violent on provocation, that the half-dozen offspring of the eagle perched mildly upon their seats without complaint.

Perhaps they liked it. One stout and jolly old gentleman enjoyed the discourse immensely, even joining in the spread of misinformation.

A pallid little woman, with a very large baby, timidly accosted Jimmie. She wanted to go to a certain place at least five miles distant, on a branch line.

Jimmie appealed to the chivalry of the passengers.

"We have got your nickels," said he, "but this here lady has been misled. We feel as if we oughter take her where she belongs. No objections?"

The passengers looked at each other and said nothing.

"Let her fly, Jimmie. We have got to make that five miles in six minutes to keep up with our idee of things," said Tommie.

They arrived at the street, but the little woman's destination was several blocks from the trolley track. Jimmie escorted her, carrying her basket, while the stout old gentleman, saying that he would like to stretch his legs, carried the baby.

In the meantime, the car that really belonged on that track came from the opposite direction. I will not repeat what that motorman said. There is a sign on all trolley cars, "Don't speak to the motorman." It is a good piece of advice, because you might not like what the motorman would say to you in reply.

He waved his hands and told 809 to get on about its business. He wanted to know why

she was there, in a tone that made the fourth-story windows fly open.

"What d'yer mean by sitting there like a toad in a rain-storm, holding us up when we're twenty minutes late already?" he finished.

Tommie spread his hands with a gesture of deprecation.

"Orders," he replied in explanation. "I can't help it."

"Orders?" said the motorman. "Orders? What are you tin-plated chumps doing in this part of the country, anyhow?"

Tommie shrugged his shoulders.

"It is like this," said he: "Old Man Rockerfeller has come to call on an old woman that used to cook for him, and the company's give him the rights of this car—my Mote's taking him around to the house now. We've got to wait till he comes back, and you've got to wait, too; that's all."

The other jumped in the air with astonishment and fury.

"Well, wouldn't that knock the frizzles out of your hair?" said he. "Those old devils can have anything they want, no matter what breaks, can't they?"

"That is just about the size of it, partner," said Tommie; "but here comes Jimmie. We'll spin back and turn out for you below."

"Thankee, old man," said the motorman; "much obliged; but I can tell you one thing: I am going to join the Ancient and Honorable Order of Amalgamated Anarchists this night. You bet! Call on his cook, and block the whole line! Well—"

This affair being arranged, 809 grasped the wire with her trolley, threw off her brakes and went rushing forward to her fate.

As she sped down Poolton Avenue a party of young men, with long hair, ran out of a café, yelling wildly. Tommie pulled the bell.

"Stop her, Jimmie," he said. "They look like our kind of people."

"Where are you going?" asked the panting youth who arrived first.

"Any old place," said Tommie. The youth stopped.

"Hey?" said he.

"What's that?" said Tommie.

"Oh," said the young man, "I only wanted to know where you went to."

"Answer same as before," said Tommie. "Any old place. We have broke loose from the tediousness of this darned commercial life, and we are taking in the United States to suit ourselves."

"Do you mean that?" earnestly inquired the young man.

"Try us," said Tommie. "We're only a few."

At this juncture, all former passengers descended from the car.

"Yours is the route we have been planning," said the long-haired young man.

All the young men boarded the car, singing loudly a song about their dear old something or other.

Thomas advanced to the front platform, and 809 gathered herself and hit the irons per record. She passed would-be passengers as the City Council passes a bill for more salaries for faithful services. She was a gallant sight.

Once when Jimmie went aft to tell a funny story he had heard the night before, 809 rammed a street-piano with such insistence and velocity that it landed on top of a load of furniture, still playing one of Sousa's marches. The Italian burned his thumb in blazing away at the departing monster with an eighty-nine-cent revolver. The young men gathered on the back platform and encouraged him to shoot with a little more art.

Three blocks away, speeding toward them, there came a red thing, coughing, with inhuman rapidity. There were four things in it that looked like Mr. H. G. Wells' inhabitants of the moon.

"Here's where your nice, red, hand-painted autymobile either takes to its own side of the road or to the trees!" shouted Jimmie back to the carload.

The young men swung themselves out to see the sight. The road was narrow. The approaching bedevilment, streaming dust at every pore, bestrode (or, better, bewheeled) one rail of the track.

"There is your nice little bubble," chanted the young men. "'Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble!' Get peevish there, Jimmie! Hit her on the end!"

Tommie, the mild, called out, "Just one layer of varnish off will do the trick, Jimmie."

Naturally, the man at the wheel of that

automobile expected the trolley car to stop. Had it been an ordinary trolley car, at the service of mere citizens, it must have stopped, but being an Independent State of Modern Progress, it left restraint behind, and could be seen to move toward that automobile.

"Shove, you shover!" shouted the tallest of the young men.

It was high time. The side of 809 hit the rear tire with a rubbery shriek. The red automobile went over a small knoll of loose stone and bunch-grass, to the left of the road, and disappeared from view.

"They can get her back again, all right enough," said one of the young men whose severe face suggested the mechanical engineer. "Just erect a capstan on top of the hill, and winch her right back. I don't know how far she has gone down the other side. Wish I had asked you to stop, and put in a bid for the job."

"Too late," said Tommie. "There is a long slant ahead of us, and we're really going to run."

"I could die trolleying!" cooed the stout young man. "Hit her up in front!" He clambered over the seats toward the front of the car.

In the general joy and enthusiasm then prevailing another young man began to ring up fares.

"Hey! What yer doin'?" shouted Tommie in the grip of habit. Then he remembered. "Let her sizzle," said he. "No harm done."

The register rang. The signal bell rang. Both gongs rang. It was somewhat like a party of Swiss bell-ringers tobogganing down the Matterhorn. Untrained horses walked upon their hind legs, and the *vox populi* was hushed.

The fat young man reached the front plat-

form. He was not only fat. He was also very strong.

"Here, let me run this old shebang?" he asked Jimmie. "I won't kill anybody."

"Well, we're in the open now," said Jimmie. "I guess you can't do much damage." So he gave him the controller and joined the vocalists.

Minutes passed by to the lilt and swing of such grand old classics as *The Bulldog and the Bullfrog,* and the rest of it, with xylophone accompaniment, accomplished by drawing a cane across the rods in the backs of the seats.

Never had happiness so untrammeled an occupancy. Number 809 spread her long wheels in the ecstasy of freedom. Her motors purred. She passed the high points with loving pats, scarcely touching them. Her inhabitants were carried away.

And then, like a handful of mud upon the

merriment fell the roar of the man at the controller. He was grinding frantically at the brake. The huge muscles of his back had split his coat in the effort.

The party got up and saw ahead of them a sharp incline, ending in an unprotected bridge.

"Gee-rusalem!" bawled Jimmie suddenly. "Wood's Bridge—the worst in the country. I forgot it."

At that instant a crack, followed by the jingle of metal, told them that the brake-chain was broken. The car, which had slacked a little of its speed, leaped forward again.

"Turn off your power! Reverse, I mean!" yelled Jimmie.

Then came a thudding sound on the car's roof.

"Oh," he groaned, "the trolley's off!"

Near that bridge, a few feet from the side of the track, there was a long haystack.

"Farmers to the front!" said Tommie. "Every man to the step, and jump!"

In a twinkling twelve young men rolled along a haystack. They rolled and rolled. They gathered much hay, but, still dominant above the mischance, the souls of ten foot-ball players and two trolley men rose triumphant. They wanted to see the last of 809.

She took the rest of the grade like a bucking bronco. She hit the bridge like an avalanche. Something gave way, or held too strongly, for 809 sprang into the air, turned completely over and went down in thirty feet of dirty water, trucks up, with a tremendous splash.

Silence stared with stony faces.

"She's gone," said Tommie solemnly.

"Beyond recall," assented the mechanical engineer.

"And I am going, too," said Tommie.

The college men said nothing, but, as the thin procession topped the hill two miles away, the fat man led by twenty yards.

II

THE NUMISMATIST

POSSESSION IS NINE POINTS OF THE LAW, SELF-POSSESSION THE TENTH

ELECTION day, '96, was big medicine in Terrapin. Miners all down from the upper camps, shoutin' Free Silver, and morose about John Sherman. All the cow-boys from the immediate vicinity were in. The immediate vicinity of any point in the Northwest is a good big scope of country—say as far as two men can ride fast in as many days as it takes to get there.

In Brown's Bank there was a sound of deviltry by night. Them back from the bar couldn't get back. A damsel with a dulcimer was dispensin' sweet strains, and a minority of the convention thought they was singing to keep her from feeling conspicuous, each dele-

gate voting for a different tune. The toot ongsom was calculated to make an escaped lunatic homesick.

In the middle of this dispensation I comes in, late. I endeavored to attract the attention of the bar creature by shouting and sign talk, for I wanted to do my duty. I know I yelled, for I could feel my jaw waggle, and my breath give out—but I couldn't hear nothin'. No one would take my money. Some one or two drinks were handed to me, however, a handful of cigars and six dollars change. Them Free Silver fellows shore believed what they said.

So I looked around in search of distraction. Five deep they stood around the faro and roulette layouts. Dealers looked like a Turkish bath from raking in money and shovin' over chips. One fellow at the faro table had more'n six bushel of checks and was betting with a shovel.

I made for the poker-rooms. Both locked. I hammers. "Shove your money under the door," yells some one inside, "and go away."

Here was a fine how-de-do. Six months' wages in my pocket and no action in sight. I went out in front to hear myself think. On the porch sat a man, unostentatious, hugging his knee, observing of the moon.

I shoved a cigar at him. He nods, sticks it in his face, and hands me up matches over his shoulder. I likes his looks.

And his sayin' nothing sounded good, too, for my ear-drums were jarred clear to my ankles. I found out later that he wasn't always silent. He was a sort of human layer-cake that way—big slabs of talk and thin streaks of keeping still.

He didn't look quite like a cow-boy. Cow-boys' eyes is all puckered up by sun and wind. Nor quite like a miner. His hands was white but they wasn't tin-horn's hands, not by no

means. He wasn't drunk, and I couldn't understand him at all, so I felt around.

"Stranger?" says I. He nods.

"Miner?"

"Once."

"Cow-boy?"

"Once. Everything else—once. Just now I am a numismatist."

I set down by him to show that didn't make no difference to me.

"Is it—very bad?" I says, kinder solemn and hushed-like.

"A collector of rare coins," he explains, laughing. His laugh was good, too.

"Oh—I see. Got any of them with you?"

"Just one. Be careful of it," he says, and hands it to me. I holds it up to the light. 'Twas a common old iron dollar.

"Broke?"

He straightened up indignantly. "Not on your life—that's no counterfeit!" he says.

I liked him. I felt friendly. My experience is that the difference between the friend that can help you but won't and the enemy that would hurt you but can't isn't worth notice. So I dug. When I gave his dollar back I slid five yellow twenties with it.

He looks 'em over carefully, feeling of them, edges and both sides, with his fingertips. "Very interesting," he says. "Very beautiful. How clear the lettering is!" And he hands 'em back.

"They're yours, Stranger," says I. "For your collection."

He swells up. "Not much. I'd beg before I'd accept charity."

"You don't understand me," I says, sparring for time. "I meant as a sporting venture. I'm superstitious. Men with a wad always lose it. So why shouldn't a broke man win? Take it and win us a home."

"Oh, that's different," says Stranger.

"I accept with pleasure—the more so as I have an infallible system of winning at roulette, founded on long observation."

"Yes?" says I, beginning to feel sorry for my hundred.

"Yes. I have observed that, if you play enough, you always lose. You just mathematically must. The percentage is a scientific certain-t-y-ty. My system is to bet high, win, and quit before you begin to lose."

"How did you ever study it out?" says I, beginning to be glad about my investment again. "I never tried that way, but it sounds promising."

"Such being the case, I got a hunch," says Stranger. "Here goes for a gold chain or a wooden leg. Take my hand and watch me peer into the future."

We wiggled through to the table after a while. The dealer was a voluptuous swell, accentuated with solid gold log chains and

ruby rings where convenient. I knew him. He wore a copyrighted smile losing, and a nasty sneer when he won. An overbearing man and opportune, Frenchy, addicted to killing his fellow-man in sheer self-defense, during the absence of his assailant's friends. Such was his unrefuted statement, the dead gentlemen having never given their testimony. He had been so fortunate in his protections that lots of folks rarely ever went out of their way to annoy him.

Stranger began hostilities by depositing a twenty on the black. Red ensued. Another twenty on black. Black comes. Frenchy shoved over a ten, and Stranger looked pained.

"I bet twenty dollars," he said, lifting of his brows.

"Ten dollars is the limit for any one bet," snaps Frenchy, rolling the ball again.

"Don't delay the game. Bet or give up your place."

"But you took my twenty." He stopped the wheel. "No bets this whirl," says Stranger.

The crowd stopped talking and side-stepped for an alibi in case the gentleman should engage in self-defense.

Frenchy bares his teeth and snarls. "You lost. I got the mon. Why didn't you inquire? You orter understand a game before you buck it. This is my game and my rules goes. See?"

"I see," says Stranger quiet. "Give me tens for these twenties, please."

Snickers from the crowd. Frenchy had them Buffaloed to a standstill. All the same, they had no use for a fellow that let his rights be trampled on this way. And yet Stranger didn't look noways like a man of patient pro-

clivities, given to turning the other cheek. Some wise ones cashed their chips when they remarked his easy smile.

When Frenchy began to roll again we had the table mostly to ourselves. I moves over by the wheel to watch the lookout, him having a game eye and a propensity to be sole witness for Frenchy when his life was attempted.

"I will now declare myself as for W. J. Bryan," says Stranger, dropping ten each on the squares marked 16, 2, 1.

"Twenty-seven, red, odd and McKinley," drones Frenchy, and scoops our thirty.

Stranger strings thirty more on 16, 2, 1.

"Nine, black, odd! Great Republican gains!"

Frenchy's singsong was plumb exasperating.

Stranger adorns his three numbers again with his last thirty, and, as an afterthought, put his rare old iron dollar on single 0.

"Single green," chants Frenchy. "Populist, by jingo!" I says, as Frenchy rakes the three tens and pays 'em, with five more to the green.

Ten each on 16, 2, 1. Then he planks the six on double green. "I hate a piker!" he states. And 00 came.

"Alfalfa," I yells. "Grangers for ever!"

Things was looking up now, but Stranger was noways concerned. "Six thirty-fives is two hundred and ten—six I had makes two sixteen. Hold on till I make a purty." He bets ten straight on 16, ten on each corner, ten on each side. Same play for 2, and a lone ten on the unit. I never seen a board look so plumb ridiculous.

"Hope springs infernal in the human breast. Let 'er go, Hanna!" he says. "A short life and a merry one!"

The ball spun nearly two weeks. "Sixteen, black and even," remarks Frenchy.

I takes a swift glance at the wheel then, to corroborate my ears. "And Bryan," suggests Stranger.

"Bryan! Bryan!" yells the crowd. Miners and cow-boys is Democrats *ex officio,* and Frenchy's surreptitious habit of defending himself was endearin' Stranger to 'em. Besides, he was winning. That helps with crowds.

Paying them bets was complex. We was over eleven hundred to the good on the turn. Other business was suspended, and the crowd lined up, leaving the gladiators the center of the stage, and a twenty-foot lane so they could have plenty of air.

"I will now avenge the crime of '73," remarks Stranger. "I'm getting it trained." He made the same layout. Strike me dead, if the ball didn't jump in a pocket—out—and back—and out again and deliberated between 2 and 35 while the wheel went around four-

teen times. You could have heard the split-second hand on a stop watch in the next county while it balanced—and at last rope-walked down in two.

"Two, red, even," says Frenchy in a shocked voice, like he was seein' things at night.

No one could yell—they was a-catching of their breath. And we lays by twelve hundred and fifty more.

"Before proceeding further with my witchcraft," says Stranger, "I would ask you to set your valuation of layout, lookout, license and good-will. Because," he says, "any fool can see that the ball stops on the one this time. Science, poetry, logic, romance, sentiment and justice point to it, like spokes to a hub. And if you're going to bank with that chicken feed"—jerking his chin toward the shattered fragments of the bank roll—"you'll have to lower your limit . . . before I play. Oh, I'm learning fast."

Frenchy looks unhappy, but there wasn't nothing to say. His pile wasn't big enough to pay if Stranger's predictions was accurate. "Bring me my sack, Brown," he calls out. Brown opens his safe and lugs over the sack. Frenchy pours it out on the table—ten thousand dollars, bills of all sizes from five to a thousand, and a coffee-pot full of gold. "Shoot," he says. "You're faded."

Stranger eclipses the one spot with ten dollar bills: ten each on corners, the four sides and the middle. "It's a sure thing—we'd just as well have some side money," he says, betting ten each on black, odd, first column, first dozen and 1 to 18. "Mr. Brown," he says, "the gentleman who runs the game will hand you seventy dollars when the ball stops. Drinks for the crowd while it lasts," and drops ten each on 16 and 2, for luck.

Buz-z-z. The ball hums a cheerful ditty,

like hot coffee on a cold day. Buz-z-z—Click.

Frenchy goes into a trance, chewing his mouth. He moistens his lips and makes an effort. "One, black, and odd!" His voice was cracked and horrified.

"What a pleasant dream!" I thinks. "It's a shame to wake up and wrangle horses, but it must be near day." I tries to open my eyes, but couldn't. 'Twas no dream of avarice. Stranger was just visible above a pyramid of deferred dividends.

"Great Democratic gains," he announces. "Gentlemen—in fact, all of you—what'll you have?"

"I guess that includes me, all right," states a big miner. "Strictly speaking, I don't want no drink now, but, if you'd just as soon tell me what color my old pack-mare's next colt'll be, I sh'd be obliged."

No one wanted a drink—nobody moved. More miracles was what they wanted. "What? No drinks?" says Stranger. "Prohibition landslide in Terrapin? Can I believe my ears—or my nose? Well, then, I will pursue my hellish purpose. I appeal to the calm judgment of this crowd, if they ever heard of an election without repeaters?" But he doesn't let his gaze wander to the crowd none whatever. He never taken both eyes off Frenchy to oncet, since the limit had been pulled on him.

He decorated the board just as it was the last time, and looks on with pleased expectancy while the ball spins. I hope I may be saved it it didn't come a repeater!

Stranger yawns as he pulls in thirteen hundred and twenty dollars. "Thanking you for your kind attention," he states, "the entertainment is now concluded. Will some one trust me for a sack?"

"Feet cold?" sneers Frenchy.

"Oh no, I'm quite comfortable. But I *might* lose if I kept on," Stranger explains. "Those numbers may not come again for ever so long. This is a piking game, anyhow. I like to bet my money in large chunks."

"You seem to be a sort of a Democrat," suggests Frenchy. "Why not back up your views? Here's seven thousand says McKinley's elected."

"Why, *that's* my game," says Stranger, beaming. "That's just what I wanted. Bryan's going to sweep the country from Dan to Milwaukee."

I gives him the nudge, for I sees our pile a-glimmering. I don't mind betting on cards or horses and such, but politics is tricky. But he prattles on, plumb carried away by the courage of his convictions.

Frenchy's nose dented. Why, I learned later, but I'll tell you now. Terrapin was

sixty miles from a telegraph office and all right-minded citizens was here present. But this sure-thing sport, knowing we was all for Bryan, had posted a relay on the North trail to bring him news. It was now way past midnight. He had known McKinley was in since about the time I was staking Stranger, and poor, innocent, confiding Stranger walks right into his trap.

"Even money?" asks Frenchy.

"I would shorely scorn to take such an advantage of you," says Stranger. "I'll give you a chance for your white alley. I will now proceed to divide my capital into five parts. The first part contains fifteen hundred dollars, which I bet you against five hundred dollars that Bryan is our next President. I will then bet you fifteen hundred even that Bryan carries thirty-six states, a list of which I will make out and seal. Third pile, two thousand dollars, gives you a chance to break

even if you're lucky. Give me odds of five to one and I bet this two thousand that Bryan carries four other states, names of which will also be deposited under seal with stake-holder. Pile number four, five hundred dollars, goes even that I made a good bet. Number five, one hundred and sixty-six dollars, goes in my pocket for tobacco and postage stamps and other luxuries."

"You're delirious. Your money's a gift," says Frenchy. "Make out your agreements. It'll take more'n I got to cover that five to one bet, but I can borrow the Northern Pacific on that proposition." He takes Brown off for a confidential and comes back with the money by the time Stranger had the bet in writing and signed.

Frenchy reads it aloud. "You are all witnesses," he says, and slaps his fist to it. "Name your stake-holder."

"Put it in Mr. Brown's safe—money, agree-

ment and my two lists of states. Decide tomorrow at five P. M. when the stage comes in."

They makes a bundle of it and locks it up. "And now," says Stranger to me, "my presentiments points for bed."

"Why couldn't you quit when I wanted you to, you ijit?" I says. "You made the worst break I ever see."

"You certainly surprise me. Haven't I raised you to a position of opulence by my acumen and foresight? Your ingratitude grieves me to my heart's core—and just when we stand to more than double our money, too."

"Acumen! Foresight!" I jeers. "'Twas blind, bulldog, damn-fool luck. I furnished all the judgment used when I tried to stop you. I put up the money, and you had a right to harken to me."

"You're my partner," says he calmly. "Half this money is yours, and all, if you need it. But I lost *your* money. This here is the

proceeds of my iron dollar. By to-morrow night we'll have eleven thousand, anyway, and here you're complaining. I do hate a quitter."

"And I hate a fool. You have a chance to win one bet, and that's all."

"You'll regret this hasty speech to-morrow night. Follow me, and you'll wear diamonds!"

"Yes—on the seat of my pants," I rejoins bitterly. And all them somewhat diverse prophecies came to pass.

When we woke, after noon, 'twas pretty well known how the election went, and we was guyed unmerciful.

But Stranger wasn't noways dejected. "Rumor—mere rumor. 'Out of the nettle danger we may pluck the flower safety,'" he spouts, waving his hands like a windmill. "I've been in worse emergencies, and always emerged."

I was considerable sore and was for not showing up to turn over the money, but he persuaded me.

"At the worst Frenchy owes me ten that I won fair on the second bet last night," he says. "If I have to collect that, I aim to charge him something for collectin'. I had that in mind last night if the green hadn't come when my dollar was on it."

I sees reason in this, and oils my guns.

Frenchy was waitin' with his lookout, gay and cheerful. "Did you bring your sack?" was his greeting.

"Why, no, I forgot. Hi! Bud!" Stranger gives a boy five dollars. "Bring an ore sack to the barkeep for me, and keep the change."

We gets Brown with the package of stake money and prognostications on our way through the crowd to a back room. Brown busts the package and begins the hollow mockery.

"Bet number one." He reads the specifications. "Bryan loses. Any objections?"

Stranger shakes his head sorrowful, and pushes over the two-thousand-dollar packet.

"Bet number two." Brown breaks the list of thirty-six states. "For Bryan," he reads: "Connecticut, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota—" His feelings overcome him and he laughs till the tears roll down his face. Frenchy leers, and the lookout rocks himself back and forward. And to cap it off comes a knock, and barkeep comes in with the sack Stranger ordered.

They howled. "I'll give you ten for your sack," gasps Frenchy.

"You needn't rub it in," says Stranger, injured. "I certain was mistook in them estimates. Pass on to the next."

"Third bet," wheezes Brown. He wipes his cheeks and tears open the list of four states. "Bryan will carry—" he begins. He

turns pale, his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth, and his eyes bugged out so you could hang your hat on 'em.

"TEXAS!" he screeches. *"Arkansas, Georgia,* SOUTH CAROLINA!"

"Then I made a good bet!" observes Stranger, popping the rest of the money into the sack.

"What!" yells Frenchy. "You were to name four additional states—forty in all!"

"Oh, no. Four *others.* These four were not in my list of thirty-six. You lost and I've got the mon. Why didn't you inquire? You orter understand a game before you play it. This is my game, and my rules go. See?"

Stranger's gun was dangling on his right hip, but, as Frenchy drew, Stranger's right hand caught his'n, gun and all, and Stranger's left produced a .45 from nowhere at all and proceeds to bend it over Frenchy's head. The tin-horn couldn't get his right hand loose, so

he reaches around with his left, jerks Stranger's gun from his hip. But he only wastes time snapping it, for that one wasn't loaded.

I thought maybe Brown and the lookout would double up on my pardner, but they didn't. They just shoved the two pits of their two stomachs up against the muzzles of my two guns, and looked foolish.

"Nuff!" screams Frenchy, letting go his gun. He looks like ration day at Rosebud. Me and Stranger walks out, sticking closer'n brothers, lockstepping, back to back.

"What'd I tell you?" says Stranger, turning in at a butcher shop. And there he asks may we use the scales, and pours our ill-gotten gains into both scoops till they balance. "Take your choice, pardner," he says. "You're short on faith, but you're hell on works!"

Next to a restaurant. Before our order comes, in steps Billy Edwards. He was a

deputy sheriff, but white. "Would you mind my asking your name? 'Cause Frenchy doesn't know. He's swearing out a warrant for you, alleging assault with intent to kill," says Billy politely. "They haven't give me the warrant yet. Course if they had I wouldn't tell you this, for you might get away before I found you."

I'd never thought to ask his name!

"Artemus G. Jones," says he, and he stuck his thumb in his vest. "Set down and take supper with us."

"Ar—ahem. Er—what does the G. stand for?"

Artie looks embarrassed. "Galatians," he sighs.

"What? Was you named after—"

"I was named," says Artie, "after a family scrap. Can't you suppress it? Artemus G. ought to identify me."

Frenchy told a terrible tale of wanton robbery. Page 57

"I—I thought it might spell easier," says Billy.

After supper we walks over and gets the warrant. Billy arrests Artie and disarms him. "*You* know *your* business—I'll make any kind of bet on that," says Billy; "but in your place I should have been far away on a bounding bronco."

We went to be tried before Judge Eliot. Frenchy kept a jack-leg lawyer named Satterlee, and he was helping persecute.

"Have you legal advice, prisoner?" says his Honor.

"A little," says Artie softly.

"Proceed. Call the plaintiff."

Frenchy took the stand and told a terrible tale of wanton robbery and brutal, unprovoked violence. He had won an election bet from prisoner, and prisoner had taken the money by force. He showed his wounds.

He shore looked like he'd been playing goat with a buzz-saw.

Brown and the lookout was good witnesses, but they let out, when the Judge questioned them, that Artie had the money in his sack before the trouble began and that Frenchy had a gun. And not a word about my presence of mind.

Artie allowed he wouldn't cross-examine them. His Honor was riled. "Will you take the stand, sir?" he says.

Artie stretches. "Oh, no—I guess it's not worth while to take up your time. Ugh—o—oaoh," he says, yawning.

Judge was furious. "Prisoner, if you've got any witnesses in your defense, call 'em. As the evidence stands—up you go!"

Artie placed himself on top of his feet. "Your Honor," he says "call Billy Edwards."

Billy gives his name, sex, color, and other essentials. Then says Artie:

"You arrested me to-night?"

"Yes."

"Was my gun loaded?"

"One of them was empty. The other one had five cartridges in it," Edwards promptly asserts.

"Was the loaded one bloody?"

"Awful."

"That's all," says Artie with a gracious wave of his hand, dismissing the witness. "Your Honor, our friend the Gaul, alias Frenchy, is before you. I am refined by nature. One gentle pull on the trigger would have removed all doubt. He would have been dead dead. He isn't. I move that my client, Artemus G. Jones, me, I, myself, be discharged, and plaintiff reprimanded for frivolity in taking up the time of the court. Had I wished to kill this jigger I certainly would have shot him. The gun that was bloody was the gun of Artemus," and Artie

paid the whole blamed court a compliment by the way he retired.

Frenchy's lawyer began to holler, but the judge cut him quick. "Sit down, Mr. Satterlee," says he. "Unless you can prove your client is dead, the court will pursue the course indicated by the learned counsel for defense."

"Selah!" says Satterlee. "I'm down. Set 'em up in the other alley."

III

THE MASCOT OF THE GRAYS

A BASE-BALL GAME AND THE SUBSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS

"WHY, yes!" said Mr. Perkins, "I'll tell you all about it, if you've got the time to spare. I was managing the Grays—that was the club from the west side of the river, you know—and we thought ourselves the prettiest things that ever played base-ball in Dakota; for a while. And then we had hard luck. Our fancy pitcher was an ex-soldier named Fitzeben; a well-built, pale, handsome fellow, with lots of style, and no heart. As long as things were coming his way, he could put up a game of base-ball that would make a man forget his religion; but if they began to find him on the other side, Fitz would go to slops on the run. First-base was this man

Falk you was speaking about. There was a Hoodoo playing second. 'Hindoo?' Yes, that's it. You've got it. He'd come a long ways to our town. Nice, pleasant little man he was, too, with a name that would have made him an overcoat and a pair of pants, and then something left for the babies—'Dammerjoodeljubberjubberchah,' or words to that effect. The boys called him 'Jub,' so it didn't matter so much about that."

Mr. Perkins stopped to crook his elbow, as they say in the vernacular, and stood a while in silence, as the tears of ecstasy gathered in his eyes.

"Whoo, Jimmy!" said he, "there ought to go a damper with that whisky—it's almost *too* good with the full draft on. Blast your seltzer! Give me water. I like my whisky and my water straight, just as God made 'em. Well, I was telling you about our outfit. One of our fellows was crooked

as a ram's horn—Jim Burke, that played short. Darn his buttons! He couldn't keep his hands off other people's property to save his neck. And gall!—say, that man was nothing but one big gall with a thin wrapper of meat around it. One day old Solomon, that had the clothing store, comes to me oozing trouble.

"'Misder Berkints,' says he, 'dere ain't nubuddy vich dakes more pleasure in der pall-blaying as I do. If you vant ten tollar or dwenty tollar vor der club, vy, dake id! dake id! I gif it midout some vords, but I ain't going to stand such monkey-doodle peesnesses.'

"'What's the matter now, Sol?'

"'Vot ees der madder? I tell you vat ees der madder. Dot feller Burke, he goom by der store, unt he valk off mid a case. A case! Mein Gott! A whole case of zusbenders, und gollar-puttons, unt so fort! I find him

in Gurley's blace, puddin' it oop vor der drinks. I don't vant to sboil der pall-blaying, bud dot feller ort to bin in chail.'

"I went with him, and we hunted brother Burke up. I read him the riot act, but he was brassy.

" 'Why, he give me the case!' says he.

" 'Gif you der case!' yells old Solomon, 'I! Vich ees me? Dis shentleman right here?' tapping himself on the chest. 'I gif you dot case? Gott! Mein frendt! You talk like a sausage!"

"There was no use of my trying to keep my face straight. Talking like a sausage hit me on the funny-bone, and I had to holler.

"But as soon as I could get my face shut, I went for Burke bald-headed. I told him I'd knock fourteen different styles of doctrine in him if he didn't behave better.

"There's where that big stiff Falk and I came together for the first time.

"'What have you got to do with it?' says he. 'No harm done if he cleaned the d—d Jew out entirely.' Well, now mostly I hate a Jew as well as the next man, but old Sol was a free spender. He'd put up for anything that was going, and, Jew or no Jew, it made me hot to hear Falk talk like that. More especially as his tone wasn't any too pleasant.

"'Who the devil are you talking to,' says I, 'me, or the hired man? I want you to understand I'm running this thing, pardner!'

"'Little chance anybody has to forget it,' he says with a big jarring laugh. Don't you know that dirty, sneering laugh he had?

"Well, I was some warm. First off, I thought I would walk away and not make any trouble; then I thought to myself, 'Here, I fought Jack Dempsey sixteen rounds the last time I appeared in the ring, and I reckon I'm not going to let any big swaggering stiff of a Dutchman get away with any such a crack

as that!' Those fellers didn't know about my being a profesh. I changed my name when I quit, after Dempsey licked me, and I never was much of a hand to talk.

"So without any words, I drove a right-hander into Mr. Falk's Adam's apple. You'll hear this and that place spoken of as a tender spot, but when you want to settle a man quick and thorough, jam him in the Adam's apple. Falk must have weighed a hundred pounds more than I did, but he went down like a load of bricks. I wasn't taking any chances with such odds in weight against me. To be sure, I had the science, but the only science I ever saw that was worth a cuss in a street fight is to hit the other man early and often, and with all the enthusiasm you can bring to bear. Falk laid on his back, very thoughtful, wondering where he was going to get his next breath of air from. A crack in the

Adam's apple does a good many things at the same time: It stops your wind; gives you a pain in the head; a ringing in your ears; a cramp in the stomach, and a looseness in the joints, all at once. I realized that Mr. Falk wouldn't be in condition to do business for some time, and as I was right in the spirit of the thing, now that I'd got started, I thought I might as well head Burke up, too.

"I cut him on the end of his Irish nose, and stood it up in the air like the stack of an old wood-burner. Then I whaled him in the butt of the jaw for keeps.

"He fell all over Solomon, and down they went together.

" 'Don'd you mindt me, Mr. Berkints,' says old Sol, as he scrambled after his hat; 'Id's all righd. Dot's for der zusbenders; gif him a vew vor der gollar-puttons.' He was a funny motzer, that Solomon. It broke me

up so the fight all went out of me. But I up-ended Burke and gave him a medicine talk.

"'I've been too easy with you fellers, and I see it,' says I. 'From this on, however, there won't be any complaint on that score. You'll feel like a lost heathen god in the wilderness, if you try any more playing horse with me; I think that blasted stubborn Dutchman is beyond reason—perhaps I'll have to really hurt him yet—but I think there's reason in *you,* and you'd better use it, unless you want me to spread you all over the fair face of nature.'

"You see, the citizens of the town had been liberal in coming through for the ball team, and naturally they took the greatest pride in it. We were like soldiers going out to fight. Every time we went away from home to play, the town saw us off with the band, and welcomed us back with the same—winner or

loser. Now, I was the manager, and of course, everybody looked to me to see that things were run right; consequently, when fellers cut up like Burke and Falk, it wasn't to be stood.

"Well, Burke said he'd give the matter his careful consideration.

" 'All right, see that you do,' says I. 'Now screw your nut home, and put your face in a sling till you look better. We don't want any such picture of hard times as you are on the ball field.'

"When Falk got so he could understand language, I gave him a few passages of the strongest conversation I had on tap.

"He listened, to be sure, and didn't give me any slack; but it was a sullen kind of listening—just that he was afraid to do different, that's all.

"I forgot to tell you that these two fellers was really hired to play ball. The superin-

tendent of the division gave them a job in the shops, and we paid 'em extra. Falk, he was a painter; and I wish you could see the blue, green and yaller ruin he made of a passenger car. The boss painter wasn't onto the game, and took the supe's talk in earnest, therefore he starts Falk out single-handed to paint the car. The boss painter was a quiet man usually, but when he saw that work of art, he let go of some expressions that would have done credit to a steamboat rooster. More, he heaved a can of red paint on brother Falk, and swore he'd kill him too dead to skin, if he dared put foot in the shop again. This boss painter was a sandy little man, even if he wasn't as big as a pint of cider, and had been leaded so many times that he shook like a quaking asp. The supe had to argue with him loud and long before he'd hear of Falk's coming back.

"Burke went into the round-house, where

all the fellers were more or less sports, and understood the play.

"Not square to hire 'em? Well, it wasn't exactly, but the crowd across the river taught us the game—they did it first.

"Well, now I'll tell you how we came by the Injun—the mascot. He was an old feller—the Lord only knows how old—who used to hang around the station selling Injun trinkets to the passengers. He had a stick with notches cut into it to tell how old he was, but the boys used to get the stick and cut more notches when his nibs wasn't looking, until Methusalom was a suckling kid alongside of that record. 'Me so old—huh,' the Injun used to say, and hand the stick to the passengers. They'd be full of interest until they counted up to four or five hundred, when they would smile in a sickly way, and go about their business, feeling that they had been taken in shameful, and much regretting

the quarter, or whatever chicken-feed it was they contributed to old Bloody-Ripping-Thunder's support. No, 'Bloody-Ripping-Thunder' probably wasn't his name; but that's what young Solomon christened him.

"Young Solomon was nephew to the old feller, and his pardner in the clothing store. He was a great sport. A darned decent young lad. It was his idea that we needed a mascot. We sure did need something about that time, for if there was anything in Dakota that hadn't beaten us, it was only because they didn't know our address.

"Ike Solomon takes Rip—that's short for the aforesaid Injun—into his store one day, a bent, white-haired old man, clad in a dirty blanket, moccasins, and a hat that looked as if it had come off the rag heap, and he works a miracle with him. He wouldn't let nary one of us inside until he'd carried out his plans.

"When we did go in, there stood as spruce a young gent of a hundred or so as ever you see. That Injun had on a cheap but decent light hand-me-down suit, b'iled shirt and paper collar, red necktie, canvas shoes—mighty small they were; he had feet like a lady—pocket-handkercher with red border sticking out of his pocket, cane in his hand, a white plug hat on his head and a pair of specs on his nose. We were simply dumfounded; that's the only word for it. The old cuss carried himself pretty well. Darned if you'd find a white man of his years that had as much style to him. And proud! Well, that don't give you any idea of it. He strutted around like a squint-eyed girl that's just hooked a feller.

"When he started off down the street to give the folks a benefit, we had our laugh out.

"Into every store of the place goes Mr. Rip. Walks up and down and says 'Huh!'

After he thinks the folks have had a fair show to take in his glory, 'Huh!' says he again, and tries next door. The whole town was worked up over it. The fellers would shake him by the hand, bowing and scraping and giving him all sorts of steers.

"Well, we had our mascot now, so there was no particular reason why we shouldn't try to get somebody's scalp.

"We sent a challenge to the Maroons, which they accepted, too quick. The game was to be played on our grounds, and with the eyes of our friends on us, you bet we meant to do our little best; but luck was against us. Our second base, the Hoodoo, had got snake bit. Rattler struck him in the right hand. He had a mighty close squeak for his life. The right field, Doctor Andis, the nicest gentleman that ever wore shoes, was coming down with the fever that carried him off.

"To crown all, just when I should have

been rustling around the liveliest, I had one of my headaches—the worst I ever had. Lord! For three days I couldn't see, and then a fool of a man told me whisky was good for it, and I took his advice. When the drink started my heart up, darned if I didn't think the top of my head was coming off. I ought to have been in bed the day of the game, but of course that wasn't to be thought of.

"Well, the boys were nervous, and I was sick, and though I tried my best to put a good foot forward, I'm afraid I didn't help matters any.

"Everybody and his grandmother turned out. The town knocked off business altogether. The weather was fine for ball, with this exception, the wind blew strong upfield. That was dead against *us,* though it helped their pitcher mightily, as he was weak on curves, and pitching into the wind added

at least a foot to his range. With our man, Fitzeben, it was different; he had a tremendous knack on curves; blamed if he couldn't almost send a ball around a tree, and the extra twist threw him off his reckoning so badly that he lost all command of the ball, and finally got so rattled that we had to put another man in, in the fifth inning. They were slaughtering us then—the score was fifteen to two. We picked up a little after that, and in the ninth it looked as if we might tie them, if we had barrels of good luck.

"Falk went to bat. I cautioned him to wait for his chance; but you know what a grand-stand player he was; he had the gallery in his eye all the time. He was a big, fine looking feller, in a way, but stuck on his shape beyond all reason; so, instead of taking it easy, he swipes at everything that came, keeping up a running fire of brag all the time that made everybody very tired.

"Just before the last ball crossed the plate, he gave the folks to understand that he was going to belt the cover off it, and the remains would land down by the river. He made a fierce pass at it; missed it a mile, caught his toe and waltzed off on his ear. He got a dirty fall and everybody was glad of it. We all laughed 'Haw! Haw!' just as loud as we could. Falk got up, boiling mad. He looked at us as if he'd like to eat us raw; but there wasn't any one round there he felt safe to make trouble with, until his eyes fell on old Ripping-Thunder, sitting up straight in his new clothes and specs and plug hat and cane, and laughing as fine as anybody. Then that big Dutchman did the cowardliest thing I ever saw; he walks up and smashes poor Rip in the face, just as hard as he could drive. 'Now laugh! you d—d Injun!' says he. There was a riot in a minute, and I had to keep the fellers off of Falk, though

the Lord knows my mind was different! The other captain refused to play the game out. He didn't want any truck with such people, he said, and, while our boys were crying hot, we couldn't do a thing but let 'em go.

"I picked up old Rip and asked him if he was hurt. He tried to smile—although his mouth looked like an accident to a balloon, where that big lubber hit him—and told me no, not hurt.

"But his eyes were on Falk all the time, following every move he made. I tell you what, my son, never you hit an Injun unawares. No matter how old or helpless he may seem, it ain't safe. An Injun's not out of it till he's dead, and then it's just as well to be careful. I know one buck that lashed the trigger of his rifle to his arm with his dying hands, and blew a hole like a railroad tunnel through the feller that tried to take his gun away from him, as well as changing

the appearance of the next man behind, which was me; you can see the mark running back from my eyebrow. I'll tell you about that skirmish sometime. It was the liveliest I ever got into. Well, the Injun's eyes were a little bleary from age before, but they were bright enough now. I know I thought it won't be well for you, brother Falk, if the old man gets a crack at you; but being so disgusted with the way things come out, and sick besides, I didn't pay much attention.

"The next day was prairie-chicken day. Fifteenth of August the law's up, ain't it? I can remember the day all right, but I'm never quite sure of the date—and all of the fellers turned out in force to reduce the visible supply of chicken; me and my friend Stevens among the rest. We got a later start than most of the boys, and it must have been ten or after before we reached McMillan's flat, where we were going to do our shoot-

ing. We drove around here and there, but we never flushed a feather.

"'Now, Jay,' says Stevens, 'let's cut for old man Simon's shack; there is likely to be some birds in his wheat stubble.' So off we went. We were sailing down the little sharp coulée which opens on Simon bottom when we heard a gun-shot to the right, and not far off.

"'Hello!' says Stevens, 'there's a fellow in luck; we'll give him a lift if he's got more than he can handle.'

"'Sounded more like a rifle to me, Steve,' says I.

"'Well, let's investigate anyhow—what the blazes is that?' For just then riz up a wild howl, 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' it says.

"'I could swear that that was the voice of that sweet gentleman, Mr. Falk,' says I. 'Tie up, and we'll creep to the top of the bank and see what's going on; if Falk's in trouble,

I wouldn't miss it for anything.' We made our sneak and looked down. Beneath us was a sort of big pot-hole, say forty foot across. On one side was brother Falk, his face as serious as though he was playing a rubber with the gent that always wins, but stepping it high, wide, and frolicsome. Gee! what pigeon wings and didoes he cut! And the reason of it sat on the other side of the pot-hole watching him—Brother Ripping-Thunder, with a rifle in his hand, enjoying himself much, and smiling as good as the damaged condition of his mouth would allow.

"'Hunh!' says he, 'that's plenty dance—now stand on head.'

"'I can't!' says Falk, 'I don't know how!'

"'Learn!' says the Injun, 'now good time.'

"Falk started to make some objections, but old Rip raised the rifle, and Falk, with a wild, despairing cuss, up-ended himself. He

was a big man, as I've told you, and when he keeled over he come down so hard it jarred the earth.

"'Wakstashonee!' cries Rip, 'that worst I ever see! Got to do better, or I shoot anyhow!'

"So up goes Falk, and down he comes, and up he goes and down he comes, in all kinds of shapes and styles till Steve and me, we had to jam our handkerchers in our mouths for fear we'd snort out loud and spoil the game.

"'Holy sufferin'!' says Steve, 'but ain't he just everlastingly run up against the worst of it this heat! We couldn't have wished no better if we tried, Jay!'

"Well, I should say that there wasn't a piece as big as a quarter on Falk that wasn't black and blue when at last he seemed to get the knack of it, and held himself up in a wobbly sort of way.

"'There,' says Rip, 'that's more like business. Just keep feet still—I going to shoot heels off boots.'

"Falk hollered murder.

"Old Rip shook his head. 'You make such noise I get rattled and shoot hole through foot,' he complained. Falk shut up like a clam.

"'Here we go fresh!' says Rip. 'Now don't move feet.'

"Blam! And the right heel zipped into space. Blim! And away went the left one.

"'Good shooting for old man!' says Rip. 'Now you rest. Bimeby we have some more fun.'

"You should have seen Falk's face as he sat there resting, with the pleasant future in his mind. He wasn't happy, and he showed it. As soon as he got his wind he tried to bribe Rip, but it didn't go. He promised him money and ponies and whisky and tobacco,

and everything under the sun. Rip simply shook his head. 'Don't want!' says he. 'Having plenty good time now. Don't talk any more. Want think what do next.'

"So there they sat, and whenever Rip looked at a place, Falk, he looked too, for he had a large interest in the matter, and it was pretty medium hard to figure out what was passing through Rip's head.

"There was a mud-puddle with about six inches of water and six foot of mud at the end of the pot-hole. Rip took that in very earnest.

" 'Hunh,' says he, 'you rested now!'

" 'No, I ain't!' cries Falk, with the sweat starting out all over him. 'I ain't rested a little bit. Now, just wait a minute—honest, I'm all played out!'

" 'No ask question—tell you about it. I say rested, you *rested,*' answers Rip, in a tone of voice that wasn't to be argued with. Falk

knuckled. 'For God's sake! What's it going to be now?' he asked.

"'You *fish,*' says Rip. 'Plenty dam big fat fish, you!' He pointed to the puddle. 'Now swim!'

"I may have mentioned that Falk was stuck on his appearance? Well, he was—powerful. So when it came to wallowing around in a mud-puddle with his brand new hunting clothes on, he beefed for fair. Moses! How he cussed!

"Then old Rip raised the rifle again, and there was a bad light in his old eyes. I can't give you no idea of the satisfaction he expressed as he simply repeated the one word, 'swim!'

"Brother Falk ground his teeth till the slivers flew; Rip moved his forefinger. That was enough. Into the mud, ker-sock! goes Falk, and the slime splashed a rod around.

"All this time the Injun had been sort of

quiet and sneering, but now he entered into the spirit of the thing. He capered like a school-boy. 'Leelah ouashtay!' He hollered. 'Swim, fish! Kick, fat fish! Kick! Make hand go! Make head go! Make foot go! Wyupee! Chantay meatow leelah ouashtayda!' Then he took to spanking Falk with the butt of the rifle. It was 'a animated scene,' as the poet says. You don't often get a chance to see a two-hundred-and-twenty pound bully lying on his stomach in a mud-puddle swimming for dear life, so Steve and me made the most of it.

"There was Falk hooking mud like a raving maniac—fountains and geysers and water-spouts of mud—while Rip pranced around him, war-whooping and yelling, and laying it on to him with the rifle-butt until each crack sounded like a pistol-shot. It seldom falls to the lot of man or boy to get such a thorough, heartfelt, soul-searching spanking

as that ugly Dutchman received. My! I could feel every swat clear down to my toes, and there isn't a shadow of doubt in my mind that Falk did too.

"And that Injun looked so comical flying around in his high hat and specs and new clothes and canvas shoes! It was a sight to make a horse laugh. By and by Steve couldn't stand it and he roared right out. That stopped the matinée. Rip looked up at us and grinned. 'I got openers, this pot,' says he, tapping the rifle. 'Play nice game with friend—stand up, big, fat fish.'

"Well, we had a conniption fit when Falk made himself perpendicular. He *was* a sight! If there ever a man lived whose name ought to be Mud, 'twas Falk. His hair was full of it; his face was gobbed with it, and drops of it fell off the end of his trickling Dutch *muss*-tash. To say nothing of them nice new clothes! Steve hollered, and I hol-

lered, and the Injun hollered. We *more'n* hollered; we rocked on our heels and laid back our ears and screeched—Falk looking from one to the other, oozing slough-juice at every vein, and wishing he had been buried young.

"At last he kind of whimpers out, 'Well, what are you going to do with me now?'

"'Kika-lap!' says Rip, 'fly.'

"And Falk flew, like a little bird; up the side of the pot-hole, over the coulée and across the prairie—vanished, vamoosed, faded, gone for ever. He didn't even stop to pack his clothes. The first train out was soon enough for him.

"So now you say he's fallen into a bushel of money, and has a fine house, and drives his trotters in New York? Well! By gum! But this *is* a strange world! Why couldn't some decent man have gotten the rocks? I tell you what we ought to do; we ought to

take a nice photograph of that pot-hole, of which the general features are impressed on his memory perfect enough not to need no label, I guess, and send it on to him with the compliments of Bloody-Ripping-Thunder, for him to hang as the principal ornament in his art gallery! Old Falk a millionaire! Well, wouldn't that cramp you! I've got to have something to take the taste of that out of my mouth. Yes, the same, Jimmy, with plain water on the side. Well, here's luck, young feller, even to old Falk!"

IV

THE LITTLE CANOE

ITS INTRODUCTION AND DESTRUCTION AT PORTO RICO

MY friend the Señor Don is of a precise and military bearing, clad with a dignity that enhances his scant five feet of stature to herculean proportions. He is a handsome little man with pompadour hair and a bold "Wilhelm der Kaiser" mustache. His speech is exact, somewhat cold, yet with a flavor of melancholy to it, like the style of Thackeray. When he expresses himself in English, it is with seriousness, that seriousness which marks all his enterprises, but it is with some honest mistakes concerning the language as a whole. A fine love for our free institutions is also

characteristic of the Señor Don. I can not tell you how his sad story of the little canoe affects me. I may only try.

"When I am to mek retoorn to Puerto Rico, Hooaleece" (which is part of my name on the Spanish tongue), said he, "I have bear in my mind the indolence of those people. Not like that rooggèd American who enjoy the manly art of boxing the eye of hees frien', or to mek strong resistance on the field of the ball of the foot, or splash t'rough the water in aquatic spooorts. No, hombre! Not sooch do they mek in Puerto Rico. Nuzzing more rrrrobust than to smoke cigarillos and to drink chocolatay, and I say, Thees ees the end of these people. What manner of civilizas-syone will mek the drinking of chocolatay and the perpetual smoking of cigarillos? That of the conqueror? No. That of the arts? No. That of what, then? That of nuzzing.

"Well, what then? I say, I shall to missionary these people. To them I shall introduce the can-ooo American. It ees a beginning. Bimeby the boxing-glove, the ball of the foot, the base-ball, but gradooally—poco á poco. At first the can-ooo. There it ees to sit still, after the manner of Puerto Rico, becows, if you are not to sit with precceesion, that can-ooo will to set up, and some man must fish you. I buy can-ooo. I have it transport at mooch expense. I veesit Señor Córdova at hees home upon the sea, and there also has arrrrrived my little can-ooo.

" 'Ah!' says the señor, 'what ees thees leetle bo-at? Eet ees very pretty!'

" 'Eet ees can-ooo American,' I tell heem. 'You pull eet with thees stick. Eet ees at your disposal. Will you not make essay at eet?' 'Buen,' says Señor Córdova; 'where to put the foot?'

"I am to tell heem, but he waits not for reply, putting the foot oopon the edge. Eenstantly that can-ooo make revolution, preceepeetating Señor Córdova eento the ocean. Ah, what confusion! What disturbance! How mooch different from America! There, when I have to overthrow myself in that canooo, the hardy cour-rrage of those people mek them to cry, 'Ha, ha, goood eye! Pool for the shore!' But now! Señora Córdova and Señoritas Córdova three mek lamentable outcry, 'Papa is to drown!' And those naygrose which are there run around like stoopeed fellows. Eet ees to me that the responseebeelity falls that my friend Córdova do not perish. There he ees, pushing the water with hees hands, and speaking as one should not before ladies.

"What to do? I can reach heem with my arm, but that ees not nautical. I have

by the—the—*como se llaman* thees pole with the iron? Ah, bo-at-hoook! si, si, si! The bo-at-hoook, and by that I hook heem.

"'A Dios!' he cry, 'I am assassinated!'

"'Be still, foolish person!' I say. 'Is not your life to be saved?'

"'Si,' he say. 'Tiene usted razón, but I shall walk.' So he place his legs upon the ground beneath the water, which is not extensive in that place, and coom to shore.

"'Will you try heem again?' I say.

"'Causa admiración!' he say, 'I theenk not. No sé the habeets of the little can-ooo.'

"So he send a naygro for stimulant, the which I eembibe, while he mek change of hees attire at hees house.

"When he has returned he say to me: 'Let us behold you master thees bo-at of eenstabeelity. Can you mek heem go?'

"By thees time those stimulant have made my heart strong, my cour-rrage severe. Am

I not American citizen? What ees eet? I tell heem that moment:

"'I can pool eet with the stick; I can put in the sail and fly over the water like a sheep. Do you wish to see?'

"All the ladies and Señor Córdova cry out they will not let me be so dangerous. But I am resolved. Señorita Margarita Córdova is a yoong lady ver-ree beautiful. I am an American citizen. I tek anuzzer glass of aguardiente—brandee. What do I care for one can-ooo? Two? Three? I send the naygro for the sail in a steady voice: 'Pepe, go at once and get the sail.'

"Señor Córdova says he will resist, but I pay no attencion. I place the pole; I feex the strings; I adjoost the ruddle; I put een three large stone for ballass.

"'Once more,' say the ladies, 'let us intreat—'

"'At your feet, ladies,' I say, 'but I go!'

"So I go, and then for the first eet is pleasant: the weend blow carefully; the little canooo jump oopon the water. But now there comes a large cloud. The weend he blow not so carefully. I am far from home. On the shore, Señor Córdova and hees ladies make observacion with a telescope. It is sad, I think, that they can see me so plain, yet am I upon thees stormy ocean. Of what avail is the telescope, if I am to shipwreck the canooo? Ah! I would not at that time that I had the ancestors of so cour-rrageous. Eet ees one of them who make Rolando see hees feeneesh. Out oopon these violent water I am cara á cara with the ma'neefeecent past. Shall I to turn the back upon the perilous? Die, then, the thought! Beside, that moment may the Señorita Margarita be with the beautiful eye at the telescope. So I am gay; I smile, as though I mek enjoyment of the terrrible bouncing of that little can-ooo; I sing

areea from *Fra Diavolo*—ti-ti-tee-tum-te-tee! But at heart I regret mooch. What is a can-ooo, for the most? Eet ees not so strong as paper; eet ees a small, little boat that thees wave who shake hees teeth at me may devour at a bite. And then, alas! comes in a wave—ta! Ah, veree cold! Veree damp! With my hat I mek attempt to hurl the water outdoors. Comes another wave—another. I labor desperate; eet weel not do. Eet ees not enough. The can-ooo is sinking. Bimeby I am to sit in the water. It happen. Then I am to clasp the can-ooo with my arm, for in the both end of eet exists an air-tink—a box made of iron which hold the air, that the can-ooo may remain upon the water.

"The stern of that can-ooo go down first; glides the large rocks for ballass to where I am sitting. Thees I am to t'row out. Pah! When I bend to catch heem, comes a large wave right down my neck.

"There am I, then, clasping that can-ooo passionately, only hees end sticking up from the water. Those large stone hold the other end downright.

"At once I think, 'Córdova shall survey t'rough hees telescope, and send to me assistance.' But on the second thought I see eet ees not to be. I have mek sooch large talk of what I may do with that can-ooo that Córdova shall think: 'Thees ees novelty American. My friend shows me all! What devils are thees Americans, to swim in a boat standing oop in the water? Who shall presentiment their leemitaciones?' And he shall call hees neighbors to see the es-pectacle. Everybody shall come and remark, 'Ah! Meeracoolous!' and shake hees head.

"When I think that, I am almost to weep. My friends to see me fish for fish with myself before their eyes! Behold the beautiful Margarita! Will it not to melanchate her days

of youth to rrrremember, 'Through a telescope I saw my dear friend dissolve een the water?' Sad, thees. Well, then, eet ees unavoiadabble. So to mek en end manful—strong. Therefore I smile again. But that smile he take all my strength. I wish not to show disrespec' for thees so noble country, yet eet ees the coostom for to mek the dollar. On that account some work is not so well done. That air-tink, on which depend my life, he leak. The can-ooo ees sinking, sinking. My ear against hees side, I can hear that little noise—shhhh!—where the water run in and the air run out. Eet ees the hour-glass marking how long I shall remain een the country. When he feel oop—pop! A Dios, el mundo!

"And eet ees so slow! I am of eempatient deesposeecion. With the long waiting I am not simpatico. I look how fast the water come up on that can-ooo, and I esteemate that I have to sit in those cold water for five hours.

And my friends observe t'rough the telescope! Misericordia! Eet ees too dam mooch! For five hours must I smile and sink!

"And when I think that Córdova shall say, 'Ah, but he ees not eenteresting, thees fellow! Eet ees a pairformance monotonoose to sit there in the water! He ees not really an American! Not sooch do they, I give my word!' then I geenash my tooth, and I shall to tear my hair, but how may I unclasp that little can-ooo?

"Now, to any man thees would seem suffeecent—a meesery plenty for the heart to hold. Yet listen! Here am I, three miles from shore in the stormy ocean, grasping a sinking can-ooo, while eet ees necessary that I seem to enjoy myself, to compensate my friends who witness t'rough the telescope—ees eet not the leemit? Hear me! Now comes the shark! Madre de Dios! How shall I now perform? Shall I make a great splash with

my feet to enfrighten that wrrretched repteel away?

"And Margarita mek observation of me in the actions of the little playful child. Ah, my heart shall burst! In her eyes to become reediculous! Si, yet here comes the shark to bite me by the leg. To splash eet ees reediculous, but what can be so mooch reediculous as a man without some legs? Eet ees time I splash. Vigorosely I the water spatter. The shark, that cowardly insect, run away—only to get hees friends. Around me they circulate, each one putting oopon me the obstruction of hees cold, unfeeling eye. And it rains. In the air ees water! in the ocean ees water; in the water ees sharks. I am tire of water; I regret that I have not brought the ball of the foot or the boxer-glove to eenvigorate thees island.

"I am think to be missionary; I am become martyr. One consolación I obtain. The rain

eet has obscured the view. From the shore they can not see. I am to smile no longer. That ees joy. A little joy, not too mooch, for now ees but a trifle of that can-ooo left elevated over the water, and I am fatigue with splashing. I am deciding shall I omit to splash, and thus allow thees beeest of shark to bite me queeck, or shall I to drown, when —ta! A hand on the stern of my t'roat, and a voice t'rough the nose, a voice so beautiful, a voice American, saying (eef you pairmeet eemeetacion), 'Hallo, bosss! Do yer cum out here for thees exercise evvereee Saturday?' and I am lift into a boat.

"So they tek me to Córdova. My clothes he ees shorten by the water; also hees color ees not all in the same place as when I mek purchase of heem. He ees the flannel clothes with the rrred, white, and blue straps. Now he ees the rainbow, and from the hat has come color to my nose, to my cheeek.

"I land calm, coomposséd—eet ees like I have made the same each day. Córdova he ees perplex; the ladies they know not what to say.

" 'Have you petroleum?' I ask Córdova.

"He mek reply, 'Yes, I have.'

" 'Of your kindness, obtain me some,' I say and retire unto the house.

"When I retoorn, the old clothes repose upon my arm; I smoke the cigarillo. With the cold blood I walk to that can-ooo. I poot the old clothes upon heem. With the petrol I es-sprinkle all. I strike the match, first to light the cigarillo—then so carelessly, I light the little can-ooo.

" 'Pardon,' I say. 'Coostom American.'

"The ladies all cry, 'Ah!' and Córdova he knock hees feest with hees head and mek outcry: 'Ah! What devils are thees Americanos! What care they for expense!'

"So I am veen-dickateed. And that end my little can-ooo."

V.

THE REVERSE OF A MEDAL

AN ACCOUNT OF THE MAKING OF MARY ELLEN'S HERO

MARY ELLEN DARRAGH was a strange girl. Her life may have had something to do with that. Left fatherless at sixteen, with a mother and three little Darraghs on her hands, she at once jumped into the breach, which in this case was the breeches, and by the use of good taste, a ready tongue, pleasant manners and plenty of hard work, performed her stint so well that now, at two-and-twenty, she was sole proprietor of a millinery establishment which employed four girls besides herself. Carriage-folk came to the door of Mary Ellen's establishment, she was so good—and so cheap.

Mary Ellen was born with both gray eyes

wide open; she absorbed the deportment of the ladies of her clientele with the unfailing surety of grasp that made her a success. She had the "business" of polite intercourse down as fine as the most pronouncedly mannered of her patrons—even to the English. The objective case received all that was due it from Mary Ellen when she had "her airs on," as her detractors put it. Now, these were no airs; they were the girl's standard. More than the tilt of the head and a shade of the voice were in them. There was the hope of something above the buying and selling, and wheedling of cross-grained customers.

Yet the effect on her acquaintances was bad. They thought it buncombe, and although Mary Ellen was trim, pretty and stylish, she had never kept company with any young man until Fireman Carter appeared on the scene. Other young men had come, seen and left, saying that kind of gait was too swift for them.

Mary Ellen wanted to sit at a reasonable distance from her caller and converse. It must be added that Mary Ellen's conversational powers were limited—there was a measure of justification in the course of the young men.

However, Fireman Carter was of another breed. He, too, had inner aspirations toward gentility. Let me at once confute any suspicion that Dick Carter was snob or prig. By no means. Indeed, in his effort not to be superior he sometimes exceeded the most ungentle actions of his companions. The war between his inner monitor and his desire to be rated a good fellow played havoc with Dick's peace of mind. When he first put his cap under the sofa in Mary Ellen's little parlor he recognized a quality in his hostess for which he long had yearned. For one thing, he had an opportunity to hold forth at length on that subject so dear to the heart of man—himself.

Mary Ellen was trim, pretty and stylish. Page 105

Mary Ellen was smitten at first sight, and why not? A mighty agreeable picture of young manhood was Fireman Carter: thin, clean, dark, handsome in face; tall, strong and supple in body; alert and ready in mind; an ideal type of the finest corps of men in the world, the firemen. He looked especially distinguished in his uniform. So Mary Ellen listened to the song of Richard Carter. Again I must interfere. Dick didn't blow and bluster about his prowess; he merely took out his soul and explained its works to Mary Ellen. He left that night feeling he was understood at last. And he went again every time he had a chance.

Mrs. Darragh, worthy old lady, chaperoned the visits, an acquired idea of Mary Ellen's. She enjoyed her evening nap in the parlor almost as much as the young folk did their discussions. Little she was needed; Dick appreciated his lady's dignity too much

to do aught to invalidate it. In fact, he studied for those evenings, reading up by stealth and artfully leading the talk to the subject on which he was prepared, and then it would do your heart good to see Fireman Carter, with extended hand explaining the primal causes of things, to Mary Ellen's cooing obligato of admiration. Solomon in all his glory was a poor fool to Dick Carter, in one person's estimation.

This was all very well, but Mary Ellen, like most young women in love, would have liked a more forceful demonstration of her idol's regard. She understood at last why her friends preferred action to conversation. This long-distance courtship might have been fatal to another man than handsome, daredevil Dick; as it was it added a piquancy; but it made trouble, nevertheless, and here's how that came.

Under the softening influence of Mary El-

len's eyes Carter had grown an intimacy with a man of his company by the name of Holtzer. Holtzer was German by parentage and sentimental by nature. Especially did Holtzer deplore the fact that he knew no nice young women—those who liked music and poetry. Dick gave him a "knock-down" to Mary Ellen, and Holtzer also became a constant visitor. The fact that it is bad policy to introduce one's best friend to one's best girl can be proved either by cold reasoning or by experience. Carter tried experience. You see, he would acknowledge to no emotional interest in Mary Ellen when questioned by Holtzer—he scouted the idea—so Holtzer wasn't to blame.

As for Mary Ellen, Cupid had pounded her heart into a jelly. She was tender to Dick's friend to a degree that put the none too modest German in possession of facts that were not so. All the overflow of regard

he received as Dick's friend he attributed to his own personal charms, and, unlike Carter, he didn't hesitate to talk about it. It was Carter's pleasant duty to listen to Holtzer's joyful expounding of the reasons why the latter felt he had made a hit with Mary Ellen, and not only to listen, but to indorse. It shows the stuff Fireman Carter was made of to tell that he stood this vicious compound of insult and injury with a tranquil face. The serpent had entered Eden, and utilized Adam to support his position, but Adam smiled and took his medicine like a man.

Several times he intended to question Mary Ellen concerning Holtzer, yet when in her presence a certain feeling of surety and a very big slice of pride forbade it.

In the meantime he was regaled with Mary Ellen, per Holtzer, until violent thoughts entered his mind.

Dick yearned for the first time in his life to

do something heroic. He sweated to stand out the one man of the day; to be held up to the public gaze on the powerful pen of the reporter. He wanted to swagger into Mary Ellen's little parlor covered and rustling with metaphorical wreaths, and with an actual disk of engraved metal on his broad chest, and thus extinguish Holtzer beyond doubt—not Carter's doubt, nor Mary Ellen's doubt, but Holtzer's doubt.

In this frame of mind he went to sleep one night, to be awakened in the early hours of the morning by a singular prescience born of long experience, which told him the gong was about to ring. For years the alarm had not wakened Dick. No matter how deep his slumber, he was always alert and strained to catch the first note of it.

The metallic cry for help vibrated through the engine-house. It threw each inmate into action, like an electric shock. The dark win-

ter morning was savagely cold, with a wind like an auger. The heroic cord was busted. "Damn the luck!" cried Dick as he took the pole; and it was no solo.

The two most picturesque feats of civilization are the handling of a field-piece and the charge of a fire-engine. Very fine was the old-time chariot race, but what was the driver's risk on the smooth hippodrome track compared to that of the man who guides a fire-engine through city streets? The chariot driver could, at least, see what was before him; the man who holds the lines on an engine little knows what's around the corner. But it's a tale told too often already. A rush, a clamor of hoofs, a roar, and they were rattling over the pavement, the stream of sparks from the engine stack and the constant lightnings from the horses' shoes making one think of the old adage of fighting fire with fire.

"I suppose," said Dick, clinging tightly

with one hand and waving the other in wild circles as he got into his coat—"I suppose some old lady has left the cat to play with the lamp."

"Yah," assented Holtzer, "or else some Mick has taken his pipe to bed with him."

Then they cursed the old lady and the Mick or whoever it might be.

"The worst of it is that I'm scart now," confided Holtzer. "I didn't ust to care much, except for the trouble, but now, when I think of Mary Ellen, I hate to go shinning around taking chances."

General Bonaparte, the worst-mannered conqueror in history, said that no man was courageous at three o'clock in the morning, an unmerited slight to the vanity of his soldiery. However it may be as to courage, certainly no man was ever philosophical when hauled from his bed at that hour. It was in Fireman Carter's mind that a small movement of

his foot would put his erstwhile friend in violent contact with the cold world below. However, civilization isn't impotent. He restrained the action and replied: "You want to leave your girl at home—fires is no place for 'em."

"You don't understand," retorted Holtzer, full of sentiment. "You can't get away from it. It ain't thinking what's going to happen to *me,* so much, as thinking how Mary Ellen will feel about it when she hears."

"You're awful dead certain on that part of it," said Dick, and now he hated his friend. The last vestige of humor had left the theme. "Perhaps she won't care a cuss—how do you know?"

Holtzer started to answer, while Dick listened, his hands clenched tight—maybe there was something he didn't know about?

There was no more time for conversation.

As they turned the corner they saw their destination, an eight-storied storage warehouse, standing alone, with boarded vacant lots at each side of it.

The watchman was there with the keys; it was he who had turned in the alarm. Without delay the firemen, hauling the hose up after them, swarmed to the roof where the flames were beginning to curl.

The fire was in the back of the upper story. While some fought it on that level, the others cut holes through the roof and turned the streams down upon it.

The hose leaked and slippery ponds formed in an instant where the water fell. The wind sawed into one's marrow in this utterly exposed position.

A head popped up and called off all the men but Holtzer and Dick.

"You fellers hold her down as best you

can!" it shouted. "Keep a watch and don't let it break through—come on, the rest of yer!"

They worked in silence on Dick's part, and with a continued rattle of what Mary Ellen would think of this from Holtzer. It wrought harder and harder on his companion's nerves, this prattle—indeed, such waves of rage came over him that he entirely forgot where he was.

Meanwhile the crowd below—gathered in strong numbers in spite of the weather and the hour—were wondering what must be the thoughts of those men standing over a furnace, a hundred feet from the ground. What could either man think of but the danger? The danger of one's daily work? There is no such thing.

This was a commonplace fire which soon would be well in hand. It had not in the least turned the current of the thoughts of the

two men aloft who formed the spectacle, while the household gods below made burnt-offerings of themselves. Then, as if to show that no fire is commonplace, a giant flare sprang from the corner of the building, poised in the air for a moment, then, overthrown by the wind, toppled toward the firemen. They leaped back—one to safety; the other, slipping on a treacherous skin of ice, to fight vainly for his balance for a second, and then to plunge down the mansard roof, speeding for that hard ground so far away. It was a trained man who fell, though. He turned as he went, instinctively gripping with his hands, and they caught—the edge of the cornice—an ice-covered edge to which they clung miraculously, while his body dangled in the wind.

So Dick, safe, looked down at Holtzer, for whom it was a question of seconds, while the roar of pity from the crowd buzzed in his ears.

He might well have done nothing. No man could go down the steep slant unsupported. Nothing was to be seen of Holtzer but his hands, lighted by the flames; hands that could not clench even, as to grip would be to force loose, but which could only make stiff angles of themselves. It would all be over in ten heart-beats, for to take it as we are doing is like examining the moving pictures one by one at leisure, instead of as they live upon the screen.

Then Dick moved. He ripped off his coat, soaked the arm of it in the hose stream, pressed it to the roof, where it froze fast on touching, and slid down his improvised cloth ladder, held only by the strength of the ice-film that bound the sleeve to the tin.

Before his frantic fellow-firemen below could scale the fence with the jumping-sheet he had hold of Holtzer's wrist with one strong hand. The strain was terrible; he felt the

coat yield with a soft, tearing sound, his head spun, yet somehow he managed it, and there they stood on the cornice together.

Then, while the crowd that had been as silent as death cracked their throats with applause, Dick spoke to Holtzer on a private matter.

It so happened that a young man who did "space" for a morning paper lived on the top floor of the flat-house opposite, and saw the whole thing through an opera-glass. He hustled into his clothes and got down to the street, working a talk out of Dick by the plea that he needed the money.

The reporter was delighted. The incident had the two elements of daring and mother-wit that can be made into the long story of profit.

"How did you ever come to think of using your coat like that?" he asked.

"Why, a feller I knew when I was a kid in

the country saved himself from drownding that way," replied Carter. "He fell through the ice miles from anybody, and if he hadn't froze the end of his muffler fast, and so anchored himself, he'd 'a' been a gone gosling all right. That thing come back to me on the minute."

That is why the first thing Fireman Carter saw in his morning paper was his own name. He started guiltily at the sight and threw the sheet away. No maiden caught *en déshabillé* could have been more abashed; and, as the maiden afterward might wonder how she *did* look—was it so *very* awful?—so did Dick. He picked the paper up again stealthily and read all about it, lost in wonder at the end. To the applause that came his way he turned an inattentive ear, thus giving further life to the old idea that the bravest are always the most modest, which looks like a double superlative and is no more true than that they are

always the fattest, or anything else. The bravest are usually the most courageous, and there ends deduction. Dick was busy with his own thoughts—something troubled him. A strange thing was the fact that though his friend Holtzer scrupulously gave him every credit he did not seek his society.

The frown of hard thinking was on Dick's brow all day. At night he asked for a few hours off and got them.

Mary Ellen met him at the door. "Oh, Dick!" she cried and gulped. "Ain't you just grand, though!" she said, and looked at him with beatified gray eyes.

Here was golden opportunity. The proper play for Fireman Carter was to reach out his strong arms and gather Mary Ellen then and there, but he did nothing of the sort. He seemed distrait and worried.

To her anxiety, he seated himself on the sofa and fumbled his hat.

"You ain't mad at me, are you, Dick?" she asked tremulously.

"Holtzer been here?" bruskly interrupted her visitor with no apparent relevance.

"Yes," said Mary Ellen.

"What did you tell him?"

"I—I—I told him 'No.' "

Fireman Carter passed his hand over his forehead, then drew out a newspaper, saying: "You've read this, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"More especially this?" reading aloud the most laudatory paragraph.

Mary Ellen was not feazed by such flagrant egotism.

"Beautiful!" she said dreamily. "Just beautiful!"

"Beautiful!" yelled Fireman Carter, leaping to his feet. The scorn in his voice could not be rendered by a phonograph. Poor man! He was about to knock the light out of those

gray eyes, to spoil his own image, and nothing is so trying to a man's temper.

"Hunh!" he continued. "Shows just about how much intelligence you got—beautiful! It's a—lie—it's fuzzy-water gas—there ain't nothing to it at all—d'ye understand that?"

This last came out so fiercely that Mary Ellen faltered as she said she did.

"All right," said Fireman Carter. "Now, I want to tell you just one thing: I ain't the man to back-cap no man, when I come to get cooled down—not with a girl nor nothing else." He tapped his knee with a perpendicular forefinger. "Not with a girl nor nothing!" he repeated. "Understand that?"

"Yes."

"All right. Now I'm going to tell you the God's truth. Holtzer'd been making his cracks about how he only had to speak and you'd fall on his neck, until he had me so sore I ached wherever m' clothes touched me. So,

when I see him coasting down the roof, the one thing in my mind was that he'd go feeling sure that he was the star with you. I couldn't stand that. No, sir! I couldn't; so down I goes after him. When I snaked him up on the roof I tells him, 'Cuss your thanks! I want this much out of you, you flappy-footed slob —you go to Mary Ellen to-day and see whether she'll take you or not—I'll bet you three months' pay agin a cigaroot you get turned down.' Now, I was within my rights there—but"—Fireman Carter stopped, wiped his hands on his handkerchief, wiped his forehead, blew his nose and swallowed hard. "But," he continued bravely, "if all the yawp that pup of a newspaper kid got rid of has had anything to do with changing results, I don't care for any of the pie. There wasn't no 'laying down his life for another' nor anything of the kind in the whole play. It was just

like I'm telling you. Well, that's all. I—I thought you might like to hear about it."

There was a lamentable change in the strong voice at the last words. The speaker stared at the door and drummed on his cap until the silence became unendurable, then he raised his eyes slowly, as a condemned man might to the gallows.

There sat Mary Ellen, drinking him in, still beatified. The meekest man who ever esteemed himself poor relation to the worm that squirmeth could not have mistaken the meaning of that glance. It was simply adoration.

He straightened up and stared at her open-mouthed.

"I'll be durned if I believe she's heard one word I said!" thought Fireman Carter.

VI

TEN MINUTES OF ETERNITY

A REVOLVER, A RATTLER AND THE BOWL OF A PIPE

THE warm June sunshine flooded the prairie with light. A little frisky breeze made silky noises in the grasses. From the other end of the plowed ground came the clank of harness and the thud of hoof-beats, as the four-horse team drew the sulky-plow, squeaking and complaining.

The monotonous work and soft air acted on the driver like a sleeping potion, and he nodded and drowsed on the seat, with the stem of a pipe clenched between his teeth.

This man, Tommy, was for ever losing the bowl of his pipe, and it was a great treat for me, a boy of fourteen, to tell him of the loss and hear him inveigh against the offending

member with all the wealth of his Irish-Western vocabulary. Tommy was full of strange oaths and more bearded than any of his pards.

I giggled in anticipation as the plow drew near—sure enough! The bowl was gone.

"Tommy!" I hailed.

"Hay-oh! lad!" said he, snapping his eyes open. "Whoa, there!—have yer come out with ther grub call?"

"No, Tommy—but the bowl of your pipe is gone."

"What, again?" and he removed the stem, regarding it sideways. "Now, ther curses of the Mormon gods be on that bowl!" and from that beginning followed an oration, lurid and marvelous.

When he had eased his mind he said: "We went down a hole over thayre, an' I'll bet it was thin it jounced out. Let's go and take a bit of a look."

We were both busily turning over the sod and searching, with our faces bent toward the ground, when a voice said:

"Well, Murphy?"

No sound had heralded any one's approach. The question came so entirely unexpected we both started and looked up.

There, seated in graceful ease upon a mound of grass, was a lean, dark man, with a revolver in his hand.

At this sight Tommy stopped rigid, still half stooped. His broad, good-natured face went gray in an instant. His eyes glittered with fear. Twice he opened his mouth to speak, and twice no sound came; but the next time the words poured out in a torrent of frantic haste.

"Stephens! I didn't mane it! Lord God, man! I take it back! Sure yer wouldn't hold it aginst me! I was wild drunk at th' time

—Fur the love of Heaven, don't shoot me! I've got a wife an' two childer."

The stranger's mouth went sideways in an evil smile.

"You should have thought of that before, Murphy," he said slowly.

"Yer wouldn't kill me before the lad, would yer?" the other went on, his lips so dry now that the words were no more than a whisper.

Stephens bent toward him with savage quietness, and with the same set, twisted smile.

"I told you that I would kill you on sight," he said, "wherever and whenever that might be, and I am here to do it."

He raised the revolver as he spoke. A great sob stuck in my throat. Through my head went a roaring noise.

I looked from the one man to the other in such a sickening ague of fear, that I could not have uttered a sound to save my life. I

waited in this suspense for the report that would shut out the cheerful quiet of the day, like a black blot. In that second of deathly silence between the men, the whispering of the breeze and the clanking of the harness of the distant horses seemed loud sounds.

Already I saw poor, honest, drunken Tommy lying still upon the ground, looking with dead eyes at the blue above.

But I saw a change come over his face, and before I had time to wonder at it he spoke:

"Stephens!" he said, "don't move fur yer life! There's a rattler widin' a foot of yer lift elbow!"

A contemptuous smile parted Stephens' lips at what he considered a silly ruse, and then it stopped frozen, leaving him with a face like a mask, and sitting as rigidly motionless as Tommy had stood but a moment ago, for at that instant the devil of the prairie

sounded his whirring warning of sudden death at hand.

For a while all three of us were paralyzed —then,

"Oh, thayre he comes! He's comin' in front of yer! Oh Lordy! Lordy! what'll I do!" shrieked Tommy.

"Keep perfectly still," said Stephens, scarcely moving a muscle of his face. "Where is he now?"

"Howly Mary! His head's a'most touchin' yer hand!"

Stephens' face turned to a green pallor as the blood forsook the tan, but his expression of calm self-possession never changed a jot. There was a certain similarity that struck me even at that instant between the finely modeled evil head of the serpent and the man's clean-cut features.

They might have been a group in bronze,

those two, for the rattlesnake had stopped, motionless, with his head raised in poise; and not the tremor of a muscle showed the man was living.

"Oh damn! damn this country!" whispered Tommy in an agony, "with never a stick nor stone in it! What'll I do, Stephens? What'll I do?"

"There's a whip on your plow; send the boy for it," breathed he.

I backed carefully away from the horrible spot, fearful the least sudden movement would bring the man's fate upon him.

Then I flew for the whip.

Returning, I placed it in Tommy's hands.

"Now, kid," whispered Stephens, "step back and wave your coat. Hit, Murphy, at your first chance."

I did as directed, and the little fiery eyes turned toward me. Tommy brought down

the whip-stock with such fury it shivered into splinters. At the same moment Stephens made a cat-like jump to the side.

The rattler lay coiling and writhing in his death agony.

We three humans stood staring at each other without speaking. A great deal had happened within ten minutes, and speech is for commonplaces—not for crises.

At last Stephens broke the silence. He stretched his long arms, and yawned.

"I feel stiff—sitting still so long," he said.

Without warning, my nerves gave way; I burst into a strangled sobbing.

Immediately the two men began to pat and comfort me.

"Why, kid," said Stephens, "you stood the rest of it like a thoroughbred; you mustn't cry now—there—there, brace up, old man!"

Between them they managed to quiet me,

and then Tommy turned timidly to Stephens.

"How about the trouble between us?" he asked.

"Don't mention it," said the other, with a wave of his hand. "I don't feel just as I did a few minutes ago." He glanced down at the still squirming snake. "If there is a God," he began, then stopped and shrugged his shoulders.—"Well, so long. I must be going. See you later."

Tommy and I watched the slim, athletic figure until it had swung down on to the coulée out of sight.

"He's a turrible man," said Tommy, "but not a bad one after all. Well, look! will ye? I'll be damned if thayre ain't the bowl of that pipe!"

And picking it up we returned to the plow team.

VII

THE PUNISHMENT AND THE CRIME

THE TOO HUMOROUS PROPENSITIES OF BURT MOSSMAN AND OTHERS

When he gets a tenderfoot he ain't afraid to rig,
Stand him on a chuck-box and make him dance a jig;
With his re-a-loading cutter he'll make 'em sing and shout.
He's a regular Ben Thompson—when the boss ain't about!
—The Expert Cow-man (expurgated).

TEN thousand head of steers were waiting for cars at Dundee. There was the Bar Cross, the V V, the California outfit, the Double Ess Bar, the 7 T X, the Bar A Bar, the Sacramento Pool outfit and the Tinnin-Slaughter wagon, all the way from Toyah. This last

named had bought six hundred steers on Crow Flat, road branded with two big Y's, and drove. When they got to Dundee they were just a few shy of nine hundred head. This is by the way, and inserted only as a tribute to New Mexico's unequaled climate.

The herds were camped in a circle around the lake, keeping an interval of about two miles from each other. Each herd had three watches of three to five men each for night-guard. But four or five men were ample for day herding; so the men took turns at that, day about, the unoccupied riding to Dundee in search of diversions. Forty or more saddle-ponies stood patiently unhitched, with dangling reins, in the plaza.

The hotel did a rushing business, Mrs. Stanley's output making a pleasant contrast to camp-cooking. Norah, the bright-eyed, was besieged in form by relays of admirers, the more favored ones being allowed to help cook

or wash dishes. Perhaps it should be stated in this connection that Norah was the only girl in a section fifty miles square. All the same, she was a jolly, pretty girl.

Now, when steer-shipping time comes the season's hard work is over, and all except the "old hands" get their time. And while most men of the cow countries drink colored fluids on occasion, the superfluent ones, who consider the putting down of liquor the first duty of man, are not the stuff of which old hands are made, the law of survival obtaining on the free range as elsewhere.

So, after the first few days, drinking at Jim Gale's place became perfunctory, though, as Dundee consisted of one hotel, one saloon, one depot, one store, the section house and two other buildings, the saloon was necessarily the prime center. The boys would not be paid until the cattle were sold, so gambling was barred by etiquette, "jaw-bone" games being

viewed with disfavor as tending to unseemly contention. Similarly the code forbade more than two or three persecuting Miss Norah at once, and time ticked slowly.

> Sun in the east at morning—
> Sun in the west at night,

a cloudless sky, and a daily statement by a badgered agent that the cars would be in at once.

Given seventy-five full-blooded, vigorous, healthy cow-boys, twenty-four hours in a day, seven days in a week, and no work, and the Purveyor of Mischief may be depended upon to uphold their idle hands.

Inhospitality is mortal sin in all thinly-settled countries, but all things have their limit. For ten days a plague of tramps had overrun the chuck-wagons, feasting on steaks, hot biscuits and the like, getting a meal at one wagon and on to the next. And when one left he

spread the glad tidings up and down, sending back seven others worse than the first, making hospitality act like a camel.

It was Johnny Patton, cook for the Pool wagon, that spoke unto Cornelius Brown and Tinnin, of the Toyah crowd, suggesting the advisability of slaying a tramp or so.

"Too harsh," remarked Burt Mossman. "I speak for a Kangaroo Court."

"A word to the Y's is sufficient," said Tinnin. Thus the pit was digged and thus the net contrived, the three collaborators appropriating the leading parts unto themselves. A particularly "gall-y" and tenacious tramp, who had adopted the V V wagon, was cast for the star. He was to be "It." Minor places were filled and drilled; the rest of us were Roman populace. The curtain rose promptly after dinner. Brown and Tinnin began to bicker.

Tinnin alleged that Brown had ridden to

the wagon for water and stayed for the whole forenoon. Furthermore, he sang a few stanzas from his favorite ditty, *The Expert Cow-man,* as bearing on the subject in hand:

"Put him on day herd, he's sleepin' all day,
First thing that starts out is sure to get away;
Comes home in the evenin', he'll blame it on the screws,
And swear the lazy devils were trying to take a snooze."

Brown, highly indignant, demanded his time. To this Tinnin demurred, saying that Brown knew very well that he, Tinnin, would have no money till the steers were sold. They squabbled, L. C., until the others pacified them and proposed town and a drink to drown unkindness, which they did, inviting the tramp to go with them. To this he acceded joyously, not having learned to dread the gifts of the Greeks.

They took several sniffs at the peace-pipe-

line. Then Brown launched into an interminable yarn of hairbreadth 'scapes and ventures dire. Every time he named a new man he gave that man's ancestry, biography, acts and connections, with any collateral information at hand. And the more he talked the further he got from the latter end of his tale.

Tinnin got unsteadily to his feet. "Hol' on!" he said. "Hol' on! That 'minds me of a song—

"He'll tell you of a certain trip he made up the trail;
Taking half of Kansas to finish up his tale;
He's handled lots of cattle, and this is what he says:
He's getting sixty dollars the balance of his days."

At this insult Brown stood on his tiptoes. "What!" says he, and jumped forward. Ward and John Henry Boucher caught him. There was a terrific scuffle, yells, howls: "Leggo,

there!" "Look out! He's goin' to shoot!" etc. Same business for Tinnin, worked up most spiritedly. Those who had to giggle left the room.

We got Brown out and hustled him to camp, calling on the tramp (his name was Harris) to assist.

Brown raged: "I've had good and plenty of that song the last month! I've got a plumb full of his slurs! If that (past-participled) old blowhard throws any more of that (modified) song my way, he'll get it, and get it hard! He's been picking at me long enough."

After the cattle were bedded down and the first guard put on, there were four at the Toyah wagon besides the tramp. Brown had finished supper and was standing with his back to the fire, smoking, when Tinnin rode up. He dismounted and came staggering out of the dark into the firelight. Pausing a moment, he began hilariously:

"To show you that he's blooded and doesn't
mind expense,
He stands around a-scorchin' of his eight-dol-
lar pants!"

Brown whirled. "Have ye got a gun?" he snarled savagely.

"Betcher. Always!" said Tinnin; "and I know how to use it."

Crack! Bang! Bang! Bang!

They emptied their guns over the fire. Harris was sitting directly between them. They were using blank cartridges, but of course Harris didn't know that, so he went right away.

When he came back Tinnin was stretched out, all bloody (beef's blood) over his breast and face; the conspirators were huddled, whispering.

Harris came up scared, white and shaking. Ward and Brown grabbed him. Says Ward, gritting his teeth:

"My bucko, you'll swing for this!"

It flashed on the tramp that they meant to lay the "murder" on him. He begged awful as they took him in, leaving the corpse and the cook to watch the wagon. It was great sport from our point of view—and in that light.

In town Brown told the boys the tramp had killed poor Jeff; and turned him over to Mossman, the "appointed" sheriff.

"Judge" Charlie Slaughter called court in Gale's saloon. All the boys were there, and most of the tramps—(they were *not* in on the joke). The station-agent was made counsel for the defense, and the trial began, with all the formalities that anybody could remember or invent.

A weird vision blew over from the hotel—a frock-coated, high-hatted, gold-eye-glassed, bold-faced man with an elbow crooked in latest fashion. He would have been a spectacle, ordinarily, but now we accepted him

as a man and brother. We explained the situation to him, and that all the boys had blank cartridges.

McClusky and Jones testified to the killing. They made it wanton and deliberate murder. Ominous growls arose from Roman populace. Prisoner's counsel cross-examined unmercifully, but they stuck.

The prisoner told his side—told it straight, too. He broke down, cried, and begged for mercy, said his life was sworn away, that Brown was the guilty man. Some of the fun departed.

The judge said witnesses for the prosecution were trustworthy men of high standing, and committed the prisoner to jail at Hillsboro to await action of the grand jury.

"Lynch him! Lynch him!" shouted Boucher, jumping up. The judge promptly fined him fifty dollars for contempt of court, which was as promptly paid, Boucher borrowing the

money of Gale. Every one was as solemn as an owl.

"Any further advocacy of lynchin' in this court," said Slaughter sternly, "will get the offending man or men three months in jail. There is no doubt in my mind as to the prisoner's guilt, but if he's executed it will be by due process of law. Mr. Sheriff, swear in deputies to guard this prisoner. Take him to Hillsboro on the midnight train."

So Mossman appointed his brother Dana, Kim Ki Rogers, Pink Murray, Frank Calhoun and Henry Street. Then Slaughter adjourned.

Mossman and his posse were about halfway to the depot when the whole crowd overtook him.

"Now, Burt," said Boucher, "we don't want any trouble with you—but we want that man, and we're going to have him."

"Hang him! Hang him!" howled the mob, the guns click-clicking through the little stillnesses. If there's a worse sound than a mob's howl, Hell's kept it for a surprise. I don't wonder the hobo turned into a bag of skin, even at the imitation.

"You can't have him!" Burt's voice sounded dead earnest. He was a good actor. He handed the prisoner a gun. "Here—defend yourself. Get out of the way, you bums, or take what's coming!"

That was our cue. A fusillade of blank cartridges covered our rush. The officers made a game fight.

Curses and screams showed where their unerring aim mowed down the Romans, but they were outnumbered. One by one they bit the dust. Mossman, the last one down, gallantly raised himself on elbow, fired a last defiant shot, groaned and died. Then all was

still; a ghastly silence which Boucher broke. "This is bad business—but they would have it. Is the killer hurt?"

He had miraculously escaped. So we took him to a telegraph pole and put a rope around his neck.

"Let me say a word," he gasped.

I like to remember that even a tramp can stand up and look at the Big Dark. He didn't cry now; he'd lost sight of himself.

"Boys," he said, quiet, "I ain't begging. If I'd 'a' done what they said it would put you straight. I'm only sorry so many better men was killed over me. You are doin' what you think is right. But that man yonder—that Brown—killed Mr. Tinnin. Him and them three men lied. Tinnin's blood and my blood and all the other boys' blood is on their souls. I wouldn't swap with them. I wouldn't want to live and be them. But you'll find out some day I told the truth. That's about all."

"Any word to your folks?" asked Boucher. "Want to pray?"

"I ain't got no folks—and no notion how to pray," he answered, catching at the nearest man to keep from falling. Then he steadied himself and looked up and around as if searching among the reeling stars for the Heavenly Help of whom he'd heard so much.

It was as ghastly as those waxwork figure murders. I sweat plenty. It was worse than if we'd been in earnest, by the whole dum multiplication table.

I reckon Brown and the rest got worrying, too, for Brown forced his part. "Let me speak to him for a minute," says he. Under pretense of talk he unlocked the handcuffs.

"I can't stand this," he whispered. "Horses is all over yonder, and guns mostly empty—cut. Quit the railroad and slide across the Jornada. If you make the bushes maybe you can break clean."

People are curious. Harris had been braced to die, but the minute he saw a chance he flew. I think I'd acted in that curious way myself, maybe.

We took after him, yelling "Catch him!" and "Get your horses!" and firing scattering shots. We run him a half-mile, then we came back, laughing and screeching.

But when we got together—a houseful of us—and begun to talk about that poor cuss hiding and trembling in the dark, Neighbor Jones blew a smoke-ring in the air and stuck his finger through it. The ring disappeared. "Where's *that* joke gone?" says he. And we all looked cross-eyed at our drinks.

But there wasn't a hobo on the Jornada the next morning.

A lot of us felt mean next day. But a good half was too young to have sense; the men that had been on guard hadn't seen it, and a lot more were used to being part of a crowd;

otherwise the first night of the Dundee comedy would have ended its run.

Probably it would have been that way, anyhow, if "Aforesaid" Smith hadn't got too many aboard. For a week after our hanging-bee tramps passed Dundee—probably warned by their underground telegraph. Then hobos straggled in. The young—and therefore hard-hearted—wanted another court at once. Wiser counsel prevailed, however, until the tenth day.

The sidings were full of cars, the buyers had cut the herds, and a few train-loads had pulled out. All the "culls" were thrown together, to be cut again when shipping was done, and driven back to their respective ranches. And—all of the boys had been paid.

At this juncture "Aforesaid" fell by the wayside, and went to sleep under a spreading soapwood tree. That was an old chestnut of his.

Now, Will Borland, suffering from remorse, had protected and kindly entreated a new tramp at the 7 T X wagon. Will was afflicted with a nasty conscience that never got to working in time to keep him out of meanness, and then dealt him misery after it was everlastingly too late.

Well, this hobo of Borland's came along and went right through "Aforesaid's" clothes to the tune of ninety dollars. But Neighbor Jones saw him.

They rounded up the hobo when he got to town, found the money on him, woke "Aforesaid," and compared profit and loss. So, after supper, they desired to give another reading of the "Kangaroo Court." There was considerable opposition to this, and several stayed away, to their everlasting joy. But most of the remonstrants joined the majority, as this lad needed punishment.

The cast was different this trip, Kim Ki being sheriff and Hopewell judge. All went merry as a marriage bell—with a few variations—until just after the holler of "Lynch him!" smote the air. Then that frock-coated, weird and unknowable stranger, who had boarded at the hotel all this while, addressed the court with diffidence and timidity.

"Your Honor, may I have permission to say a few words?" he asked.

"Oh—I suppose so," said his Honor. "Only be short."

The stranger removed his eye-glasses and polished them while he looked over the crowd with a benignant smile.

"Pardon me, gentlemen, if I detain you a moment. Let us forget this bum and your monkey business. I have been much pained to overhear the comments of some of your number upon myself. You boys are so frank

and fearless and free"—another oily smile—"and are careless, perhaps, of giving another pain."

He lowered his voice confidentially. "Now this pained me more, as you hit very close to fact. I *was* once an abandoned and ungodly man—but I have been shown the error of my ways, and now it is my firm intention to become a missionary." He put the glasses in his breast-pocket, slow, thrust the handkerchief under his coat-tails, slow—and produced two cannon too quick for eye-sight—nothing but a flash.

"Don't be rash," he said in kindly tones. "His Honor will tell you my colleague is standing at the back door. Is it not so, Judge?"

"Yes-es!" stammered the judge.

There was a silence thick as custard.

"I will not insist on the formality of putting up your hands, gentlemen; as the poet hath it:

He produced two cannon too quick for eye-sight. Page 154

" 'If the red slayer think he slays
Or the slain think he is slain,
They little know my subtle ways.' . . .

"Now, *I* know *your* subtle ways, being aware your guns are loaded with blanks. I offer in evidence that no one should try to reload. My colleague will proceed to testify. Doc," he called across us, "try the clock hanging over my head—hold its little hands as they lay!"

"Ker-bang—two shots." A bullet-hole appeared neatly in the center of the III and another just inside and over the IX. The time was 9:15.

"Fair—fair!" said the missionary, gently chiding. "My brother's left hand can't do just what his right doeth. Still, I'm satisfied with my pupil."

His voice was rich and unctuous, and one eye rolled upward sanctimoniously—the other kept strictly to business.

We listened, fascinated—some one snickered.

Our friend cleared his throat and continued:

"We realize we could rake a tidy sum out of this bunch if we were grasping. But if we get exacting there's three possible bad results. First, it would entail considerable hardships on you, and on all those to whom you are indebted. Secondly, it would arouse evil passions in your hearts.

"Lastly, and most important to us, you would probably make us try high jumping over the hills and far away.

"So we make you a proposition which will strike you as being eminently reasonable. You are a playful crowd, fond of your little joke— Ah! speaking of jokes, pardon me one moment. Prisoner, you are discharged. Let this be a lesson to you, my dear brother, to be honest and upright in all your dealings

in the future. Do you know, if I were you, I would not stay here? Going? *Good*-by! God bless you!—To resume: We could take your money, your guns and all your saddled cattle, and quite probably break away safely. But we would be sorry to cause you more than a temporary inconvenience, and we freely admit that you would give us the chase of the century. If we should be unfortunate enough to be captured you might prove vindictive.

"In view of these considerations, we would like to have the matter go off like a little pack of firecrackers among gentlemen; especially as we do not think you will take strenuous measures to pursue us—our capture would put the monumental kibosh on you for ever.

"You could hang us, but the way we stuck you up would be told for years to come. If you see fit to keep the matter private, we will not mention it.

"This is our moderate proposition: Let each of the foremen throw one hundred plunks in the plate, and each of the range-riders fifty. The owners shall contribute one dollar a head on each of their steers. That is less than the biblical tithe, as they have sold for fourteen dollars a head.

"We regret that two owners were unable to see the humor of your festivities, and that three foremen and some twenty of the boys thought your fun too one-sided. Still, over seven thousand head of cattle are represented here, besides five foremen, and fifty of the boys at fifty dollars each, making, say, ten thousand dollars altogether. Come up! The center table looks lonesome.

"Voluntarily donate so much to the good cause, and pledge your words to give us an hour's start before Uncle Tomming us. Sixty minutes you hold your dogs." He stopped and set himself. Says he, through a thin and

tight mouth: "Otherwise we take all and risk all. Let her come quick."

Dana Mossman spoke up: "Your proposition is all right with me, Parson. I am much interested in mission work myself. But I want to call your attention to Frank Dodds here. He wasn't in on our little witticism the other day, and only came along to keep us from going too far to-night. He swore he'd tell the hobo we was only fooling before we got the rope around his neck."

"The point is well taken," said the Parson pleasantly. "Your attitude is sportsmanlike to a degree, and does you great credit. Mr. Dodds may pass. Now, has any other gentleman any suggestion to make?"

"A nice point arises in my mind as to what would happen if we resisted," said Tinnin. "You couldn't kill all of us, you know—and when we did get hold of you you would find it a matter for subsequent regret."

"Very true—ve-ry true," said the Parson musingly. "Yet not one of you knows but *he* might be the one to have bad luck. We count on that—and you must count that, expecting no mercy, we should show none."

"Yes—that's so, too. I'll tell you what I'll do. Leave out the horse-wranglers—they're just boys and don't know no better than to follow us—and I'm with you."

"Well, I don't know about the horse-wranglers. It might be a valuable lesson in the future. They can not learn too early to avoid pleasure which gives others pain. What do you say, Doc?" This to the silent one.

"Boys free," said that vigilant person. "Cut it short! You talk too damn much!" And that was his only remark that evening.

"All right. We had set our hearts on clearing up an even ten thousand, though. I see some steer buyers of a facetious turn here.

Perhaps they will be good enough to make up the deficiency."

The Colonel spoke up deprecatingly: "Now I do not for a moment desire any bloodshed. But as to taking all our money, remember that ninety per cent. of it is in checks. You couldn't use them, you know. And I certainly do not carry a thousand dollars with me in cash. I 'm willing to give you what money I have—but I can't pay you one dollar a head."

"Vent slips," said the Parson. "Your quota is twelve hundred head, Colonel. Don't try to fudge. It would be difficult to realize on all of it—as you justly observe. Still, much can be done by two resolute men. We might take a few of you out in the brush and shoot you some if the checks were not paid. I fancy you would see that they were. 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.' Really, you tempt me. One hundred

thousand dollars is a big stake, worthy of a bold throw. But let us not be covetous, my brothers.

"As to the other matter, I happen to know that Mr. Gale had ten thousand dollars sent down to cash checks with. You owners either give him your checks for your contribution, to cash, pledging your words as gentlemen and cow-men to redeem them, or we will clean out the crowd, safe and all, and take you check-men out to herd, till we have a friend negotiate the paper.

"If Mr. Gale will cash the checks for you we will let him go free. I am sure he will—for if he don't I'll draw a check for it all, and I know he'll cash that! Speak up. All or part! The time has passed pleasantly, but I must go. You have indulged in Terpsichorean recreation and you are now under obligation to remunerate the violinist."

Neighbor gasped. "How was that again? I only speak English and Spanish."

"Ante up!" quoth the Parson.

"Oh!"

"Copper your jaw and take what you want," said Slaughter. "None of us is looking for getting killed. And *I'm* not going to push a foot after you, for one. It serves us right. Come on, boys. Hurry up—I want to go to bed."

So said we all of us. Kim Ki and Neighbor passed the hat. The cow-men drew checks. Gale cashed them. The Parson counted up. It was a little over nine thousand six hundred dollars, and they made the buyers draw checks then to make up the even ten thousand.

"Far be it from me to doubt your integrity," says he with the hand-on-the-chest act. "But, as a precaution against carelessness, the Colonel, Mr. Tinnin, his Honor and Mr. Moss-

man will accompany us for an hour or so. Good night, and pleasant dreams! Try and control your humorous propensities. Charmed to have met you, I'm sure—and I hope to meet you Hereafter (with a capital H)—boys—not before! Good night!"

And they went out the door with their hostages.

VIII

CAMP CUNNINGHAM

THE STORY OF A DAKOTA STORM

THE population of Dakota in the early days was miscellaneous, to say the least of it. Men from every part of the world, from every station in life, and for many reasons, hobnobbed together in terms of free and equal intercourse. All social rules were turned topsy-turvy—or rather, ceased to exist. You could get a German baron to plow your garden for you, if you wanted style, and were not particular about the aim and scope of the furrows, and perhaps while the baron was plugging away, desperately struggling to keep the plow from emulating the exasperated worm of the old story, Jimmy O'Brien would come sailing by behind his team of 2:30 trotters on his way to deposit the money obtained

by wise government contracts, and sing out a jovial greeting of "Stick to 'um, Bar'n, old man rocks! Thot's th' road t' wealth—but ye'll be a toird man when you land there!" And the baron would wave his hand in acknowledgment of the greeting, and smile grimly to himself in acknowledgment of the statement.

All manner of younger sons inhabited the country, making nonsense of the occupations they took up under the disguise of earning an honest living, and for which, as a rule, they showed a superb incapacity.

One of these scions of a noble house was James Cecil R. DeG. Cunningham—often known as Slim Jim or Pelican Cunningham —sometimes as just plain Cunny. He had a tent on a homestead on the banks of the Chantay Seeche River. It was a very clean, white tent. All the empty tin cans were piled up outside, like cannon-balls in a fort, and

every morning the estate was carefully "policed." No scraps and odds and ends littered the courtyard of Camp Cunningham.

"Like master, like man," says the saw, and in this case truly, for the man Cunningham was exactly like the master Cunningham-sur-le-Chantay Seeche. No matter what his work was, he always managed to look as if he had just come from the wash—not that he was beautiful, but he was so chalky clean. His hair was clean, a peculiar no-color-at-all-cleanliness; his teeth were clean, and almost the size of piano-keys, when disclosed by his wide, good-natured smile; his eyes were pure white and pale blue. They showed behind the powerful lenses that corrected their myopia, like specimens of old china in a cabinet. They also had something of the trustfulness and instant claim for sympathy in their short-sighted stare that one often sees in children's eyes.

Cunningham was full six feet two in stature, bony, and loosely put together. His legs were of such length that Billy Wykam's remark, that, "if it wasn't for his necktie, Cunny would be twins," had more foundation in fact than most hyperbole. But his walking gait was the most remarkable thing about him physically. He took immense strides, swinging his arms to their full extent, in unison, while his head had a continuous pecking motion. Paul Falk, our intellectual giant, said that Cunningham in action looked like a demonstration of a transverse vibration, and at rest like Cunningham, and nothing else on this or any other planet. He was one mortally homely man, if ever there lived one, yet there was something high and striking in his long, big-nosed face, and a genial quality in his perfect manner that would win you to liking him at the first meeting and for ever after. His was the style of the true nobleman, and gained

for him the respect of the hilarious crew among whom he lived, despite his oddities.

Many a quiet kindly turn, so carefully contrived that he never guessed it was a kindness, he received from his neighbors; and for his part no man could have been more willing or useless. With an ax in his hand he was the most dangerous companion imaginable. He nearly brained two of the boys before they could think of an excuse to part him and his weapon without hurting his feelings, and when he started to help in an undertaking, not the least of the troubles of the others was to render him harmless. On one occasion Billy Wykam had a matter of twenty or thirty calves he wished to brand. Cunningham was in the corral, armed with a rope, intensely serious and businesslike. He tripped up almost everybody with the ropes; he "shooed" the wrong "critters" out of the corral, so that somebody had to take horses and chase them

for miles over the prairie until they could be secured again; he roped Antelope Pete by mistake when the latter was flying down the corral towed by a powerful yearling, and gave Pete a fall that it would take years to blot out of the spectator's memory; then in his zeal he hauled away on the rope, dragging his victim quite a distance before he could be stopped.

It was as much as the rest of us could do, so weak were we from laughing, to prevent the angry plainsman from laying violent hands on Cunningham, who, of course, was ignorant of having given offense. In short, Cunningham was so persistently where he ought not to be, and so entirely in everybody's way, that some of the boys were like to die of suppressed profanity. Billy asked Paul for mercy's sake to set the man at something where he wouldn't be playing the old Harry with things all the time. Paul elected him to the position of

branding-iron tender, whose duties are to heat the irons, and hand them out when needed. Even here the Englishman distinguished himself, for, peering near-sightedly around with a hot iron in his hand, he touched Billy's buckskin bronco on the flank with it. The ugly little beast promptly kicked Cunningham into the fire, and then tore around the corral, spreading disaster and confusion. Poor Cunny got several bad burns, for which the rest of us were not as sorry as we should be, inasmuch as they forced him to knock off for the day.

If anything could have added to the absurdity of Cunningham's performance, it would be that he was the "perfect gentleman" all the while; explaining, apologizing, or hazarding an opinion, it was always with the little graces of the drawing-room. How ludicrous this manner is in a rushing, dusty, hot, swearing cattle-corral is a thing that has

to be seen to be appreciated. We always tried to secure Cunningham's services elsewhere when we had something on hand which we really wished to put through. The man had a modest pride in his tent that it would have been wicked to disturb, yet for his safety's sake it became a friendly duty to drop him a word of warning. He had landed in the country in the spring, and hitherto the weather had been delightful, without an omen of the furious storms that were sure to come during the summer. It seemed to us that his tent wouldn't amount to much in the grass of Dakota, but we didn't like to tell him so. At last we appointed Neighbor Case our commissioner to acquaint Cunningham with some facts we thought he had overlooked. After praising the tent and its surroundings, Neighbor came to the heart of his message.

"It's mighty nice—mighty nice, Lengthy," he said. "Yet, if you want my advice, I'll tell

you what I'd do; I'd take a half hitch around a boulder with them guy-ropes, if I was you. Even then, you wouldn't have no sure thing. Wait till you see one of our little breezes come cantering over the prairies, son; you'll wish you had a cast-iron tent, fastened to the bowels of the earth with bridge-bolts."

"I'm sure I thank you awfully, old man, for your interest, you know," replied Cunningham, "but," inspecting his moorings carefully through his glasses, "I think she'll stand it. The pressure of the wind on a normal surface is only two pounds to the square foot, for a velocity of twenty miles an hour, and, of course, on oblique surfaces—like the tent-walls—much less, much less. Why, even in the cases of exceptional storms, the pressure does not rise above eighty or ninety pounds, and as I was careful to get only the best of canvas and cordage, she should stand that, don't you think?"

Neighbor Case was impressed, if not converted. "That's a great head you have on you, Lengthy," he said admiringly. "You seem to know old Mr. Wind's ways as well as if you and he had played in the back yard together when you was boys; but I want to tell you something. He may act like that in books, and only press you for so many pounds as you tell me about when you're normal and he's hitting a certain gait, but you can't tell what he'll do when he gets you out here all alone on the prairies. He may forget the rules and press you just as hard as he darn pleases; or he may shift the cut and knock you into a cocked hat before you can get the books out to show what he ought to do. No, Lengthy, book-learning is good, and you won't catch me saying nothing agin it; but if I was you, I'd let it slide on this occasion, and tie her up to a boulder."

Cunningham, however, had a trait in common with many gentle-natured people—that of mild obstinacy—and he stuck to his tent just as it was.

We could not urge him further, so there the matter dropped—until the day of the storm, then several other things came to earth.

We woke one morning to find the country wrapped in a fury of red light—not the cheery glow of daybreak, but a baleful crimson, as though it were raining blood on a world of fire. In the west a massive heap of storm was rolling, against whose murky blackness the small buttes stood out ruddily. It was a boiling storm; the vapors curled and twisted in a way that meant wind and hail, and plenty of both.

"By the great Hohokus! We're going to catch it this trip," said Billy, and the three who composed the household of his ranch be-

gan scrambling about in nervous haste, gathering up the things that might be blown away by wind.

In the middle of it he called out to me, "Say, Hank, don't you think we ought to give old Cunny a lift? Here's where his shanty comes down, sure!"

This was more than kind of Billy, for about the only thing in the world he feared was thunder and lightning, and this filled him with a dread that neither his strong will nor good sense could in the least abate or control.

Of course, I could not refuse. We started on a run for Camp Cunningham, a mile or so down the river. Yet, though the distance was so small, we had reason to doubt that we could cover it. Half-way, a hailstone the size of a child's fist went whistling over our heads, ricocheted along the sod in great bounds; then came another and another—the skirmish fire of the storm.

The suggestive "thwuck" of these missiles as they took the ground made me draw in my head as far as possible—like a turtle.

I was just wondering what effect one of them would have on the human body, when a big fellow smashed fairly against the side of Billy's head—a sounding blow which knocked the sturdy little man staggering.

"We've got to get out of this," he said, grinding his teeth in pain, "or we'll be slaughtered!"

A trickle of blood from a cut in his head bore witness that this was not a figure of speech. Let any one who doubts the Lethal quality of a Dakota hail-storm stand out in the open while a dozen or so expert ball-pitchers open fire on him with pieces of ice, weighing up to half a pound (the actual conditions of the storms are sometimes a worse matter than this comes to), and I fancy he will soon be changed from a skeptic to a fanatic.

If I had any doubts they were instantly removed by a rap on the arm which numbed it to the finger-tips. For a moment we hesitated, but it was too far back to the ranch, so we broke for the scant cover of some bullberry bushes on the hitherside of Cunningham's coulée.

As we flattened ourselves behind these the real storm was on us in a breath. We were stunned by the uproar; the all-pervading heavy drumming of rain and hail, and the hiss of their passage; the yelling and booming of the wind, and the thunder that smote the earth, crash upon crash, like the blows of a hammer. We did not think—we held on tight and waited. One could not see ten feet into the gray of falling ice and water, and the rush of it nearly took one's senses away. It all but turned the level prairie into a seething lake, and the slopes into rapids. Suddenly the

downpour ceased almost as abruptly as it began, and nothing remained but the wind. I say "nothing," because that is our idiom. I do not use the word in a depreciatory sense, for we had full realization of what force there is in mere air in motion that morning. It swept across the prairie in one great tide of power. There was not a flutter nor break in it. It jammed us down in the mud, and then held us there. At first it seemed as if our heads would be whipped off our shoulders if we dared lift them up into the full swing of it. But this acme of energy passed at last, and we turned our eyes down the coulée to see how our friend had fared.

Tent Cunningham had so far fulfilled its architect's expectations. A swollen yellow river from the coulée washed its edge and it was plastered with mud by the hailstones, but otherwise uninjured.

"He's—weathered—it!" roared Billy in my ear. "Yes," I answered, "coulée—bank—protected—him. He's—all—right—if—"

I was going to say "if the wind doesn't shift." But before the words were out the wind had shifted.

Rrrr-oooo-oof! It shrieked down the coulée and with a snapping and a cracking, like a small Fourth of July celebration, away went Tent Cunningham. The canvas rose in the air, flapping tragically; and beneath it, galloping in frantic haste, were the longest and thinnest legs in the world, as poor Cunningham, caught in the folds, was hustled onward. We could see nothing of him but legs, and as the flying tent bore a rude semblance to the human figure, the combination looked like a gigantic ghost, with slender black legs, hurrying off to haunt somebody.

Such leaps and bounds as Cunningham made were never equaled by the winner of

any Olympia, ancient or modern; and such another vision never was beheld outside the course of a nightmare. There was a fever of madness in its curvetings, its gesticulations, its wild plunges.

Down into the Chantay Seeche, all a-suds from the recent bombardment, the specter swooped, and then came a mighty struggling and floundering.

Surely no more ignominious death could be furnished the offspring of a noble house than to be held down by a tent and drowned in two feet of water!

We sprang, nay, we flew to his assistance, for once on our feet the wind scurried us ahead whether we would or no. We spaudered and slid over the slippery mud, like novices on skates, and we should have over-shot our quarry but that we grabbed at the tent in passing.

Now, it turned out to be in nowise so easy

to get the man out as you might think, for the moment we lifted a fold of the canvas it caught the air like a kite, and down we went, under it, or over it, as the case appeared. In the former instance, it was no small job for us to get ourselves out again, let alone helping Cunningham. The very devil was in the tent, and it began to look as if the man would be drowned right under our hands, when it occurred to me to cut the knot of our complications.

I passed my knife over a bulging place which I judged held some part of the victim, and instantly the head of James Cecil R. DeG. Cunningham popped through the opening—a head from whose mouse-colored whiskers and long nose the water dripped pathetically, and which regarded us with injured but vacant near-sighted eyes.

Poor Cunny! His mind must have been thoroughly addled by the events of the morn-

ing, for the first words he spoke—in the tone of one declining an ice—were: "I don't like this kind of thing at all, y' know!"

"You don't, eh?" said Billy. "Well, if it's the last act, I'm going to laugh."

He surely did laugh, and I with him. We howled, and splashed, and slapped our legs until we were too weak to stand up, and then we sat right down in the water. Cunny set up a stentorian "haw-haw" out of pure good nature, and the sight of him, with his tent around him like a toga, full of dignity, but willing to oblige, as usual, went near to finish us.

"Don't look at me, Cunny, don't!" begged Billy. "If you look at me again like that, I'll die right here!"

"Very good! Very good, indeed! Haw, haw, haw!" replied Cunningham.

In the middle of the hilarity there came a hail from the river bank in a voice of wonder.

It was Antelope Pete, mounted, on his way to Billy's to compare notes on the morning's flood.

Now, Antelope is a very serious-minded man for the country, and it wouldn't be well to repeat all the different things he said might happen him if he ever saw the like of this before.

"Do you fellows always go out in the middle of the river to crack jokes in thunder-storms?" he demanded. "What in blazes is the matter with you, anyhow?"

We tried to explain, but we couldn't get three words out before we were in roars again, and Pete was perfectly disgusted.

"Well, I'm going to leave," said he. "I've got something else better to do besides sitting here watching the most all-fired, copper-riveted, three-ply, double-backed-action damn fools that it was ever my luck to come acrost."

We prevailed upon him, however, to throw

us his rope, and as Cunningham was so fearfully and wonderfully entangled in the tent that it would have been next to impossible to extricate him, we tied the line to a corner of the tent. Antelope then laid the quirt on his cayuse, and man and mansion were hauled up the bank together.

When we reached a state of mind where we could discuss the matter calmly, we asked Cunningham if he still intended to live in the tent. Oh, yes, yes, indeed! The tent was all right; it was the wind that was wrong. Then followed a learned disquisition on vacuums, and worlds, and other meteorological phenomena which stumped us completely. Indeed, it came to my mind that Cunningham almost proved that he and the tent never went into the Chantay Seeche.

Part of his theory which I can remember is that the wind, in passing over the coulée, partially exhausted the air beneath it, like the

action of an atomizer, he explained to our unscientific minds. And thus Tent Cunningham was drawn up and on to disaster most unlawfully. The idea of Cunningham and the tent being "atomized" into the creek strikes me as being particularly good. I feel still more entertained when I think of the tin cans, the ham, the bacon, the lantern, the little sheet-iron cooking-stove, various articles of clothing, et cetera, which were included in the spray.

It is perhaps needless to add that the gathering of all these was the work of most of a morning. I don't believe I ever saw anything more pathetic than the little stove stranded on a bar some distance down the river, its tiny legs lifted in appeal to the now speckless heavens. Perhaps it was thinking of the untimely fate of the frying pan and kettle that had warmed themselves at its fires so often.

When Cunningham gazed upon this jet-

tisoned cargo his face betrayed his feelings. His soul, which loved cleanliness, order, and system with a blind worship, revolted. One could see that it was in his mind for the moment to "jump the country," but it passed. The determination and courage which were at the bottom of the man's nature rose in force, and he busied himself in restoring the former status, singing a loud air without any tune to it, the while. The territory of Dakota was a large country—some of the belongings never appeared again. It is pleasant to think that Cunningham's card-case may have fallen into the hands of a wandering Indian, and thus spread the refinements of civilization.

It seemed that our friend was going to buck the elements on first principles—put up the tent in the same old way, and have it blown to Halifax in the same old way to a dead certainty. There was no more use in trying to argue with him on the subject than if it were

a question of politics; but Billy, who used more tact in one minute than I could understand in ten, turned the point without the least friction.

He asked Cunningham to expound the theory of the levitation of the tent again. It was done, at length, and breadth, and thickness.

"Now, as I understand it," said Billy, "a vacuum's a place where there ain't anything, and when things try to get in it makes trouble —are my sights at the right elevation?"

I assured him he was correct so far.

"Well, then, see here, Cunny, why don't you kind of fill in around the tent with sods? You can't make much of a vacuum out of good deep-cut sods, I'll bet my wardrobe. You see the place where the vacuum would have to be, to do you dirt, will be occupied and it can vacuumize all it wants to around the prairie after that, and you needn't care."

"An ex-cellent idea!" cried Cunningham. "I thank you very much, Mr. Wykam."

So it came to pass that Tent Cunningham was surrounded by a wall of sod eight feet high and four feet thick. The only criticism I heard was from a stranger who put up at Billy's for a while.

One morning he came in and took me by the shoulder, "Come with me," he said. We went on until Tent Cunningham hove in sight.

"I've seen lots of what strikes me as strange things in this country," the stranger said, "but that place knocks the spots off the cards. Would you be kind enough to tell me what that wild-Injun-peaceful-settler contraption is?"

"That?" I asked with a sober face. "Why, that's Camp Cunningham."

"I dare say it is," he returned. "But that ain't the point I was looking for. What I

want to know is, why did the population go to all the trouble of building a sod house, and then put up a tent inside of it?"

"Merely a question of taste—it's his hundred and sixty; why shouldn't he build what he likes on it?"

"That's so, too," replied the stranger. "Excuse me for meddling; it's a free country, if ever there was one."

So the matter dropped right there.

IX

HOHANKTON, PETTIE AND OTHERS

THE TALE OF THE TRAINED PIG

"DO you remember Red's pig, Foxy Bill?" said Hydraulic Smith. "Well, I was in a camp that had a pig for its chief feature, myself. He wasn't a fat, comfortable old lad like Foxy Bill, but a sort of cross between a razor-back and a buffalo. He was a little feller, with a mane on his head and on his shoulders. He had high shoulders on him, like a buffalo, but, as for the rest of him, he was that thin you wouldn't have known him for a pig, except for the curly tail at the end.

"He was our sole and only pet. We was too high in the air for cats. They died of heart disease. Nobody owned a dog. We called

piggie Johanus Eliphas Hohankton for a noted statesman in that part of the country, a great man on the pension vote (believe he drew three himself), that told us politics with one wooden leg and a mouthful of language trying to gurgle through Greaser Pepe's gin.

"I think Hohankton discovered the lack of dogs in town, for he tried to act the part as much as he could. He'd go trotting up Main Street, kind of sniffing at you and rolling his eyes, give two or three squeals like a dog, when you called to him, then sometimes he'd go mosying around important, full of his own business, just as you see dogs do.

"He took care of the coats and the lunch-boxes. If a stranger came around he'd show his tusk with his lip all curled up, and growl something ferocious. He was a right smart animal. I can see him now, going the lengths of Main Street, sounding like a busted clarinet player telling his woes in music, to let you

know he was there, and that if there was a doughnut or some apple-sass, or, in fact, almost anything that a hog might like, you could please your friend Hohankton by putting it forth.

"But nothing in the world would get him fat. He was built like a fish, fore and aft, and in a straightaway I think he could hold a jack-rabbit.

"The Judge, he was a heavy-built old man who wore his chin on his breast most of the time. When Hank walked alongside of him he hunched up his back like the Judge, and put on much the same expression, until the Judge rumbled out, 'Durn that hawg!' and give him a scratch on the back with his cane.

"Then, if there was a lively bunch, why, Hank was merry, too. He would trot and amble with one side, and gallop with the other, make prancing steps, biting at his own tail till an oyster'd laugh.

"We had miles of claims on the bank. The pay was light, howsomever, and you had to send about twenty acres down the stream to get enough to pay the hands off. We had plenty of water on a two-hundred-foot fall, or it wouldn't have paid for the trouble.

"Howsomever, we sent an almighty lot of farm land down where the ranchers didn't want it. They objected to our covering their vegetables with four solid foot of tailings, consequently they kicked like anything, but it was just mine job against vegetable job, and after the law courts had been worn out and decided:

The rose is red, the sky is blue;
We don't know nothing, no more'n you,

and everybody had an injunction out against somebody else, which he couldn't enforce, why it came back to our old friend, physical trouble, again. The farmers outnumbered us, but we ranked in the first class for physical

trouble, so there hadn't been anything but an exchange of personal remarks.

"There was just one rancher, who grew too fast when he was young, and then stopped too quick after he grew up, came at us fierce. He called us all kinds of twisted crooks and straight-out thieves he could think of. He had it in for me particular. Once, as he got to putting it on me, he grew excited, and began to swing an ax around. He came nigh hitting the stream one or two passes, and I told him:

" 'You jay bird, you'll be a-sitting and a-singing on a limb if you monkey with that little squirt of water. You are perfectly safe from me during working-hours, but don't fool with our piping lay.'

"Not one man in a million knows what a stream of water can do, and he was one of the million that didn't. So he r'ared up and said he would splash the water over me, and he

raised his ax. I had half a mind to turn the lever and squirt him over the neighboring bluff, but I had pity in my soul, so I hollers, 'Don't!'

"But them words was too late. He *is* one of the very few men who will ever tell anybody how he tried cutting a hydraulic stream in two. While he was blasting me he wandered about, sitting on his horse loose; the ax came down. I was looking right plumb at him, but just how, when and in what way he disappeared I will never tell you.

"I followed the direction of the stream until I found him. He was curled up on his back, about half the ax handle in his hand. Soon as I came in sight he hollered, *'Whoa!'* I stared at him. I come a little nearer, and he yelled *'Whoa!'* again, and tried to scramble to his feet. I learned afterward that he'd been a mule-skinner for a while and thought his team had turned on him.

"I grabbed him by the neck. 'Now, you horny-headed son of toil,' I said to him, 'you've learned one thing to-day. Keep on doing that for three thousand, six hundred and seventy-five days in the year and by the end of that time you won't put your thumb on the buzz-saw.'

" 'You don't mean to tell me a stream of water done that!' he gasps out.

" 'You have three shies at it,' I said. 'I'll furnish the axes, and every time that stream doesn't knock you one hundred and fifty feet you get a new cigar. Want to buy in the game?' I shambled him off to his wagon and dumped him in.

"He laid low for his revenge, like the darned farmer he was, and meanwhile Hohankton was the cause of our undoing. Animals have a heap more sense about natural things than men has. Hank got in the way of following the boys over to the side of the

creek. You know I used to undercut the bank while the boys worked the big stone out for me and loosened up the dirt here and there. They was as careless fellows as you'd see. Yet, at the same time, no man wants an eighty-foot bank of dirt on top of him, and so they'd be quite anxious in their minds for about five minutes before the slide came.

"The first day Hank went over there he threw up his head as though he smelled something, straightened his tail, grunted loud and away he went. The boys near got pinched looking at him and laughing. When they went back, Hank went back, and the next time he blew his signal everybody departed. We were not such a swell-headed crowd we couldn't learn a thing from an animal. Hank, old boy Rocks, was just as right as he was before, and after that he took up his position as Official Notifier and he never went wrong. The boys could work right along till they

heard that squeal, and then do fast time to the creek.

"We was proud enough of Hanky before, but now he had this actual stunt of his that we could prove to any or all lookers-on, our chests stuck out till the buttons popped off. Other fellows would drop in with stories of dogs that had done all the wonderful things that you have heard tell of, and cats that used to milk cows, and horses that could figure up to six times six, and all them lovely relations that gets to be natural history around the camps, and we could stand for it and say 'Yes,' just as if we believed it.

"Then we'd remark we had a pig in camp; and wouldn't say anything more until Hank signaled, and the visitor would begin to open his mouth to see everybody a-running, asking why. Then down come the bank!

"Usually the stranger went and put up money that it wouldn't happen again. After

three times, though, he'd let go, scratching his head and meditating: 'It's so—I see it's so, but how the blazes a pig knows more about the acts of gravitation than a white man—you tell me now?' And we'd answer we weren't going to tell him. Let him find out, same as we did.

"Well, he'd admit in a kind of grudging way that that pig of ours was quite a curiosity. Yes, he'd admit it, in a sort of easy, offhand style, that old Hank was quite a curiosity, and we didn't have to say anything.

"They would go on from Placerville, working the yarn up, until fifty mile away it seemed we had a pig that could smell a pay streak, always pointing, like a pointer dog, when he smelled the gold; that he usually walked back home on the hydraulic stream, and that when it was time for a bank to fall he would make sounds that sounded so much like 'Look out!' that you couldn't hardly tell

the difference from a man's yelling it, except that it had a kind of pig brogue to it, as it were, and so forth.

"We didn't have to advertise Hank one particle; even that gol-darned farmer heard of it, and slouched around on the quiet till he see how things lay.

"Well, here's the way he come near getting even. If there's anything I ever really did love it is to get my hands on a monitor lever and just feel that old streak of water flying across, smacking, gargling and gurgling in the earth, ripping her out, mud and suds a-flying all over, rocks going, too, and just a little touch bringing the blade in the stream and swinging her around, because, you know, four men couldn't turn that nozzle by bull strength, where just a little blade that cut into it at each side made it turn like a delicate vine.

"Now, I liked that as well as when I used

to live back East in a little old town up in New York, and it was my job to water the front street, and when there come a carriage along I always used to be absent-minded somehow, and that carriage would run right into the water, and then them good old aunts of mine used to explain it, how absent-minded I was, and the ladies that got wet wouldn't listen to it, and the nigger coachman and I had it around the barn fast. Well, I was just the same kind of kid again when the monitor was playing, and the sun was shining, and the clouds was sailing, and the grass was growing, and everything that ought to happen was happening.

"Yes, my mind was in an A-1 condition, peace and good-will toward men, and everything else, when all of a sudden Hank gives his three locomotive whistles, and pulls for the shore, followed by twenty grown-up men, falling over bushes, jumping over boulders,

galloping and waving their arms in wild excitement, Hank far in the lead.

"'What in thunder?' I said to myself. 'That bank ain't nowise loosening;' when I happened to look down, and there, on a little bench, clapping his hands, sat that guerrilla-faced, swivel-jointed rancher, and there was coming up to him a black-and-tan dog, no bigber'n three rats. He couldn't see me, and the boys couldn't see him. They watched for that bank to fall, and there wasn't any fall, and they waited, and they began cussing their good old friend Hank, that had never failed them once before.

"When I thought of Hank being thus abused, just because a cussed little dog—a kind of beast he ain't never seen in his life before—has run him out, my fighting-blood began to run quick all around my veins and arteries, and I thinks to myself, 'Oh, you gol-darn potato-bug assassin! You slayer of squ'sh bugs!

Here's where you get the thirty-third degree of Free and Accepted Masonry with all its tips, spurs, right-angles and variations—so mote it be!'

"It wasn't the hour for blue checks to run in my direction. I grabbed the elevator wheel and sent the stream heavenward, started her swinging, hoping to drop it right on the back of Mr. Rancher's neck. I didn't intend to push him into the bank and hold him there. No, I was the slickest boy handling a stream the country contained, and I thought, perhaps, I could hit him in the neck with about seven hundred assorted tons of water, and leave his hat hanging in the air. I wanted to do something real nice to him.

"Well, it was *me* that got it. I always told the Boss he didn't load the tripod heavy enough. When I sent the stream up she teetered for fair. It was like a camel buck-jumping. There ain't much give to three iron

legs, and so, friends, I was sitting up and down times oftener than I could realize.

"There wasn't a bronc' buster that wouldn't have yelled, 'He's a rider!' if he'd seen me stick to that machine. We crow-hopped on the rocks back and forwards, and alleman' all. We pitched forward and back, and we did the double teeter, and as for the stream—the smack when she hit things sounded just like a little small giant baby, nine hundred feet high, clapping his hands with glee. Sometimes through the whiz and howl I could hear men's voices asking why I done so, and they no longer sounded like the voices of comrades and friends.

"I was helpless as a child; couldn't grab lever, wheel nor nothing. Finally one leg toppled off an edge of rock and then—! Well, she shot the cook's shanty across the stream two hundred yards first whack. It was so sudden it didn't even put the fire out. The

boys took their solemn oaths the kitchen stove went across, smoking as calm and peaceful as anything, just like it had decided to take a little fly. Nothing to interrupt business, but just the kind of exercise you would think a cook-stove would take. Yet they was astonished that I should shoot a cook-stove across the stream.

"While they was standing there astonished, the old nozzle bucked 'way back, and plowed a well in a bank ten feet away. I bet you that stream could shoot a hole right up Niagara Falls, and when she mixed it with the mess of dirt and rock in that bank, kicking it backwards at me, old Napoleon at Waterloo was a dum poor effigy for Hy Smith. I couldn't see how it was ever going to be possible for me to breathe again, and the awful roar and swatting and smashing makes it queer how I ever got to hear or think again.

"But she passed through that bank of

dirt in no time, and all the fellows that was asking, 'Where's he gone?' found out. They got the last of the bank. Men could show you dents where pebbles no bigger'n buckshot had been blown into them.

"The old monitor got real gay, and thought she was a Fourth of July pin-wheel, and after that there was nothing but water-works on the whole cussed creek. She took from one side to the other in quick swings. Billy, the cook, said he saw a block of boards take wings and sail right over Hooker's Mountain.

"I was dumbfuzzled and geewhizzled, till my head was full of curled hair and insect powder. I hung on with all hands and feet by instinct, like an insect, until finally we steadied down and played in the same place for half a minute, and I brushed some of the water out of my eyes.

"Beside me was Hank, looking reproachful, as much as to say, 'I *thought* you knew your

limit, Hy—but you must have stayed in town *too* long last time.'

"Then the next thing that appeared was that darned little black-and-tan dog that had caused the whole trouble, followed by our friend, the rancher. I pined to wash his whiskers. But it was not to be. The monitor had jacked all her levers and cogs by knocking around.

" 'Come on,' I yelped to the crowd—'Come on, you flapjack faces! Help me hold this critter down.'

"They got a move on. We tied the monitor and sent word to shut off the water. Whilst we was all stepping on each other's feet, I thought I heard a mixture of sounds like small roars and large 'Ki-yi's,' but the farmer, he was very busy, thinking we might catch on to who did all this, and come down to his cabin some night and take his whiskers as a momentum.

"I had been pounded enough, so one of the lads took my place. I stepped out. There was a battle going on. That cussed little black-and-tan terrier was snapping and flying around poor old Hohankton, that had never received anything but kind treatment in his life, and scarcely knew what to make of this. I hate a black-and-tan dog, anyway. I like to see a dog with legs big enough and long enough to support his body, and with a body hefty enough to give the legs something to do. This yapping little devil didn't have none of my sympathies. When I looked at the miserable beast I felt something *had* to happen to him.

"Just then he made a quick jump and nailed old Hank by the nose, and at the very same minute somebody hollered for me to come and fix something.

"After I pounded my thumb and wrenched my wrist getting the lever back in some shape

again, they stopped the water off, and the country was saved!

"Then I grabbed that farmer and began to recite facts about his career, while the boys spit on their hands and took hold of shovels. It looked like uncle farmer would lead an upright life for some time, but he begged and hollered and pled, so the fellows loosed him from the position where we could best apply shovels, and he explained that he didn't go for to do all this when he started, and we let him up.

"He rose to his feet and apologized to us, singly and collectively, and then he says, 'Now I'll just get little Pettie and ride right along home,' and he began to holler, 'Pettie! Pettie! Pettie!' and all that come was old Hank, who looked him straight in the face.

" 'Well, what has become of the durn little coyote?' says everybody, and then it just occurred to me that I knew, so I went back to

"Little Pettie has departed," I said. Page 211

where I had seen little Pettie grab old Hank by the nose, and, sure enough, there was a lovely little black tail!

"I brought it down to the rancher and I said, 'Little Pettie has departed, but he, she or it leaves this for you as a souvenir.'

"The rancher says, 'Gosh almighty!' as if he couldn't believe his eyes. I held up the tail, and I asked Hank:

" 'Here, little Hanky-Panky, did it eat the rest of little Pettie?' and Hank looked at the tail and slouched off, with a kind of long and non-complaining squeal.

" 'Well,' says the Boss, brisk, 'if we find any more of little Pettie we'll send it down to you, but I guess that's all you can collect of him now.'

" 'Well, darnation!' said the farmer, and he brushed off the dust and dirt of his hands on his trousers' leg. 'Well, say,' says he, 'I don't know whether to weep or to yell Hosanna!

As for me, personally,' he said, 'that cussed little dog has nigh chewed my fingers off,' and he showed us all kinds of bites on his fingers; 'but,' he says, 'on the other hand, it's my wife's pet, and every time one of the children lets itself get bit by it, why, their mother raises sin with them for tormentin' it. If I had a good lie ready I wouldn't weep one bit. But the circumstances and hullabaloos and waterfalls and geysers I have seen in the last twenty minutes have left my mind running in streaks.'

"We all looked at one another. We couldn't think of anything, so we shook our heads.

" 'Well,' said he, 'perhaps by the time I get home I will be able to explain how little Pettie separated himself from this,' and he twirled the last remains. 'Perhaps I can,' he said. 'I don't bear you boys the slightest grudge no more. I can't. I set this dog on your pig a-purpose, and I can't pretend to be at all

sorry that your pig et him up.' He shook his head again, and fixed his hat on.

" 'Well,' says he, 'matrimony is the mother of invention. I reckon I'll get out of it somehow. Good-by, boys!' And he took one more look at Pettie's tail and put it in his pocket. 'If anything happens to me you will know who it is by that,' said he.

"As for the rest of us, we enjoyed ourselves figuring on just *what* that rancher could explain. You can bring home a dog and say its tail has been cut off someway, but to bring home a tail and say the dog has been cut off someway is a hard proposition to work on the female mind that has lived on a ranch twenty years or so."

X

THE FATAL GUM

A SERIO-COMEDY OF LIGHT FINGERS AND HEAVY BOOTS

ZEKE SCRAGGS had been working out on the dry patch, where it was a long ways between drinks, and lukewarm water from a canteen no particular comfort. He complained, and I produced a discovery in the shape of a tin-foil-wrapped package of chewing-gum marked "Lily Sweet."

"If you chew a piece of that when you're dry, Scraggy," I said, "it will stave off thirst for some time."

Mr. Scraggs received the offering in his large palm, and poked it with the forefinger of his other hand.

"Yaas," he said; "y-a-a-s. But it's dangerous."

"Dangerous?"

"Horrible. You don't ketch me minglin' myself with no 'Lily Sweets.' *I* consider the lily of the field how she grows. You wouldn't believe that anything that sounds so innercent could be the tee-total ruin of a large, dark-complected tin-horn, with a pair of muss-taches like Injun-polished buffler horns, would you?"

Like almost anybody else would have done, I said I wouldn't.

"Well, it was," said Zeke. "If you could see that gam, and compare him to this here package of choon'-gum, you wouldn't ever guess that either one could do much of anything to t'other; yet I can a tale relate of that combination that would make each particler hair stand up-ended, like the squills of the frightful porkypine."

"Rats!" said I, being but a youth.

"You got any hairs that's particler by na-

ture? No? Well, then, I'll spread this terrific osculation of the connimgulated forces of Nature befo' you, as Charley says. My kind of narrative is the plain, unvarnished tale. Folks that tell a varnished tale is apt to sit on the varnish before it's dry, and they'll stick to it, come cold fact or red-hot argyment; whilst I'm always willin' to prune, cross-harret, revise or alter accordin' to my victim's feelin's. That is, of course, if they go to corner me, which, between gentlemen, is a low-cut outrage. But this business about the gam is dead straight. I had relinquished all amusements and was livin' quiet in order to save money, before I got acquainted with the facts.

"First place, comes a female missionary out to the ranch, and she was a corkin' fine-lookin' nice young woman, too, who tackled me on the subject of chewin' terbackker. She had me all tangled up in my own rope and double

left-sided front and back before the clock struck one.

"I tried to arger that nobody wouldn't care whether I chewed terbackker or grass, so long's I was happy and doin' no harm. But that turned out not to be true. She said so.

"Then I tried to reach her womanly compassion by tearfully expoundin' how I'd miss my cut of plug a day; I never touched her. Hers was a new religion. It had a different figger on the back from any I'd had dealt to me before. Seems it weren't a sin to chew, but it was the control I'd lost over myself that put me in the hole. I had just to git command of my mind and everything would come at me, like a North Ca'lina town's nigger's dogs chasin' a three-legged cat up an alley.

" 'But ma'am,' say I, 'I've knocked off before; an', as for control over my mind, durin' the hull spell me an' Star Plug was separated,

friends had to hold me to prevent me goin' in an' robbin' my own grip. Control of my mind,' says I, fightin' noble, 'why, you could 'a' sicked a burglar on me, an' he couldn't have found no such thing on my person. I didn't have no mind. I walked up an' down, day and night, in that man's town, like a ravin' maniac stupefied by his halloocinashuns. All that passed beneath my shinin' dome was: "Oh for a chew! Oh for a chew! Oh for a choo-choo-choo-choo! Whoeep! Brakes!" And when the cars went over the switch or a cayuse cantered up, they said: "Terbackker, terbackker, terbackker," to my famished ears. All I wished was that the houses was built of plug, and all I thought of was that I could get earnest with an ax. That's *all* I *could* think—all!'

"'But you must use the control!' says she, eager.

"'You mean, ma'am,' I says, 'that I must

"'I will not use terbackker,' says little Zekey Scraggs." Page 219

seek out a quiet place, clench my fists, grind my teeth to a feather-edge and strain my suspenders to the bustin' point in one calamitous effort to think I'm not thinking?'

"'Precisely!' says she, victorious. 'You Western men have such a ready grip on essentials that it is a delight to be your guide.'

"'Well, Uncle Tom and the dogs a-bitin' him!' says I to myself. 'Lead on!' I took off my hat aloud and bowed to within two of my noses to the ground. 'To be able to foller so gentle and able a guide straight to perdition is a joy,' says I. 'I quit the class of roominants for two weeks. I will not use terbackker. No!' says little Zekey Scraggs. 'There's my hand on it, ma'am.'

"And she just turned pink with joy. She was an awful nice little gal. Only she was so jam-full of knowledge that it was hard for her to understand things.

"Having put up this job on myself, I went

to our storekeep' and called for my time. I knew I'd need bright lights and excitement for a while. I begun to feel already that a chew wouldn't go bad.

"There was the storekeep' gazin' fixedly at a book; his lips was movin', but he seemed in a kind of rapture. When I hollered to him, he jumped all over and barked at me like a dog. At the same time he grabbed up a cigareet, stuck it in his mouth, took it out, looked at it and fired it down again.

"A light broke on me. 'So she got you, too?' says I.

"'Hooppitty Hoppitty Hippitty Yerhoop!' says he. 'That's just what she's done! I'm three days out. Not a smell of smoke in three days! My soul has gone away and won't have any more truck with me. I don't know who I am, nor why. I've been trying for an hour to find out how much three and

two make. Take your money and leave me to my fate.'

"With this picture in my mind I broke for town. Half-way there I was chawin' a latigo-strap like a wolf. When I hit the street, I jumped through the drug-store door.

" 'What you got for a man that's quit chewin'?' I gasps to the boss.

" 'Franky Frenchman's Fool-Killer,' says he—and with that he turns his head and expectorates satisfactorily into the spittoon.

"Seeing him, I near died of a broken heart.

" 'The next crack will be at your expense,' I told him. 'You hike out somethin' for my case,' I says. He shoved me out a package, just like that."

Mr. Scraggs poked my gift.

"Just like that. I put the whole bizzee in my trap and chomped on it like a lion. I walked around the town, chompin' on it. I

waved my jaws till my face ached. Seemed to me like I'd never done anythin' in all my life but bite Injy-rubber. And then I pushed madly for the first stud-poker game.

"When I got there, nothin' was movin'. This here tin-horn I mention was polishing his muss-tache with both hands, whilst he talked to a few hangers-on.

"I became ashamed of that choon'-gum and I stuck it under the table, very sly and surreptishus. I felt like a man again.

" 'Fire the engine up!' says I. 'Gimme five stacks to practise on.'

"The gam hopped gleeful toward the table and give the drawer a yank. She stuck. He cussed and pulled harder. She came open with a jerk and a kind of a long, sticky s-m-aaa-ack, followed the strings of gray.

"The gam arose from where he'd sot on his backbone and looked at the drawer.

" 'We're not doin' any business to-day,' says he, showing me my little eagle-bird.

" 'What's happened to the trade?' says I.

"He simply p'inted to the hunk of gum (which I had most unforchinit jammed ag'in' the drawer).

" 'My wildest fancies have got exceeded,' says he. 'Do you want to hear a weird and wilful tale of woe?'

" 'Of course not,' I says.

" 'All right,' says he. 'I'll tell you.'

" 'Well,' says he, 'here's the way she come up. I'm a lost one in the wilderness out at a telegraph station. I see where I get my talents buried in a napkin made of sole-leather, hence I get handy with a deck of cards in front of the lookin'-glass. My work is so good after a while that I lose my whole salary to myself, and yet watchin' careful all the time in the lookin'-glass. I'm fit to handle the

steamboat trade, but I aims higher: I buy me a ticket to Noo York and hunt up a place where they hew to the line, let the chips fall where they will.

"'"What's your noo box o' tricks?" says the Murphy that run the joint.

"'"Well," says I, "nothin' new, but the good old reliable line. The world is my oyster, as Hamlet says, and I've got openers."

"'"H'm," says he, makin' a fat man's shift in his chair and pushin' his seegar into the other corner of his face. "I want you to understand this is a dead-straight game run here, my bucko—yet you look good—s'pose I've come in an' laid thirty cents or so on the king, coppered. Lift the joker out of that deck an' le's see what happens."

"'He threw me a pack and I riffled and boxed 'em.

"'"Why, you lose," says I, much surprised as the king came out open on the turn.

"'"And not so worse," says he. "Play on!"

"'I slid 'em out of the box to the last card. "You only lost your footin' once," says he. "The way you beat my corner play was a little obvious. Exercise your little finger till it's soopler. You can handle a roll to-night. But mind this," says he as he grunted himself on his feet, "this is a dead-straight house. If anybuddy *ketches* you bein' technical, we jump you, from me to the cop on watch. You get five per cent."

"'Well, sir, that was the loveliest little bower of rosebuds you ever smelt! Checks was joolry. We didn't have change for nothin' below a fifty-dollar bill. Our line of customers was these tur'ble knowin' young men of the world, who'd stood the terrific experience of a college careerin'. They was a darin' outfit. They was so fast they couldn't help talk about the pace they was hittin', and what they didn't know about the game of faro

was my business. It was like bein' knocked down in the street by a strong man and have money pushed into your clothes. I did things at that table that never happened before in a civilized community. I was so youthful, you know, and it was a constant problem to me whether they'd stand for biting off the corner of a card to make things come my way.

"'I run in rhinecaboos that 'ud make a heathen Scandahonian farmer fall off his hay-wagon, but them men of the world simply contributed yallerbacks—oh, good old yallerbacks!—beautiful to the eye; soft to the touch; *so* encouragin' to the feelin's! I reckoned I'd buy the durned old Western Union an' get even with the cuss who used to pound it to me from up the line—Ouch! vanished dream! Sweet vision stuck to earth by that con-cussed, snappy, stringy, bouncy, mud-colored foolish food fer flighty females you see before you!'

"At this p'int," said Mr. Scraggs, "he shot

his finger at my gum, breathin' hard an' glitterin' his eyes.

" 'Yes, sir!' says he. 'There lies the cause of my roon! And such a fiddlin', triflin' stuff to wreck a man!' He got some of his breath back. 'You orter ask "How?" ' says he, 'and I reply, "By contractin' the habit" '—'Not of gnawin' it'—he adds hasty, 'but steppin' on it. Here was I sittin' on sunset clouds and floatin' over beautiful scenery, till there comes a cold blast of the winds of chance, and from that moment my path in life was strewed with the discard from rosy lips. For two solid weeks I did nothin' but scuff my feet or flag a shine-stand to get rid of the day's gatherin' of gum. Them Eye-talians used to grin in a way that made me want an open season on furriners, as I cantered up to 'em, smicky-smacky, smicky-smacky, trailin' soft gray hairs behind me like a retired minister's whiskers.

" 'They'd look up at the sky and make dago

remarks, whilst they curried my feet with a brick, till the cold sweat of mortification melted my b'iled collar. And once a flap-doodle actor goat, with a red, white and blue hatband, got gay and told me not to use such naughty words about these tributes from the mouth of beauty. I swatted the air where he'd been when I started to hit him an' he took me by most of my trousers and turned me ten somersaults. How was I to know he was Honest Mike, the Deck Hand, who chucked the villain over Brooklyn Bridge every night and Saturday matinée?

" 'Well, I'll cut it short. No matter where I fled, the fiend pursued me. I went to the opery one night, to get my frazzled nerves soothed by the champion yelpers of the pack. For two solid hours I lived untroubled, not even worried by the show, as I couldn't understand a word of it and nobuddy on the stage had complaints too deep to sing about;

but comin' out, me enemy waited on the edge of a step for me and I landed astride of a stout lady's neck, beggin' her pardon and fightin' a half-dozen men for five minutes. When I explained, even the stout lady laughed.

"'The boss at my joint cussed himself into asthma, wondering what the sticky stuff, tracked all over his new seven-dollar-a-yard carpet, was.

"'But I ain't goin' to weary you with trifles. One day the boss tipped me off that there was a bunch of alum-eyes due that evenin'; he said they was fellers that had took the college course, but recovered, and that the bowlegged elephant song and dance that extracted money from our regulars would be looked upon with reproach by the new-comers. I got nervous. Playin' ag'in' them little first-crow roosters had been bad practice. I soaked my hands in warm water and prepared

as best I could, but when I saw that gang before me I knew why they was called alum-eyes. They puckered my soul up, my hands got too wet with sweat for business—you know your fingers has got to be not too dry, to slip, and not too wet, to stick, if you're turnin' out high-grade work.

"'Well, I was excited, yet it was a reel pleasure to be up against reel men.

"'I had a habit of running my fingers over the rung of my chair, to keep 'em in right shape. 'Twas a thing nobuddy could complain of, and the game just held on to its hat and flew. How much money you had was the limit, and to put my little bank on the other side of the river, quick, was the idea of the alum-eyes.

"'I forgot everythin'. I was fair hollerin' inside for joy. My buckers had a good square chance to catch me at it, if they could, and I

was haulin' money when—well, Fortune had patted me on the back with one hand, while she got ready with a black-jack in the other. In my state of feelin' I put a heel, a chewin'-gum-covered-heel, on the rung of that chair and took it off again, without noticin'. As the play stood, the outfit had me whipsawed. I drug my fingers over the rung of that chair, that chewin'-gum-covered-rung, without noticing; then I wiggled my fingers in a Chinee ketch-as-ketch-can over the box and raised 'em with a playin'-card firmly stuck to each finger. *Then* I noticed, yes; and everybody noticed. Silence fell six foot deep. One of them alum-eyes says:

"'"That may be magnifercent, but it ain't Hoyle."

"'And I excused myself by ducking under the table and jumping over the banisters.

"'Once on the street, I hoopled her for the

corner. My play was to wait till the crowd went out, and then see the old man, who had a rubber-band on my roll.

" 'I thought I'd peek around the corner until all was clear, then rush the boss with my hard-luck game of talk, extract a little of the juice of the root of evil from him, then fold up my legs like a jack-rabbit and silently lift myself through the breeze, back to the sage-bush—back to where the prairie-dog and the owl and the rattlesnake live in harmony together—never excepting the rattlesnake, so long's there's plenty of young dogs and owls.

" 'The game must have busted when I took the fence, for here come the bunch of alum-eyes right up the street. I had the curiosity to wait and hear what they was talkin' about, as I had a corner to duck behind when they come close. Well, I waited, and didn't hear nothin' I'd care to write home to mother. They made me so cussed mad, I overstayed my

time. Just when they got within range, I started to hop swiftly backwards. But I didn't. No. My feet had grew fast to that sidewalk. Seems the city had been mending the block pavement, as usual, and some horney-souled son of toil had spilt a square yard of coal-tar on the sidewalk. Me to the middle of the coal-tar district, of course—you can chew coal-tar, you know; I've done it.

"'So, as I remarked, I didn't gracefully side-step. Exactly not. I gave one yank and landed with my knees up in the air. Them feet was riveted fast, you bet, and my joints just had to yield accordin'.

"' "What is this we have?" said one alum-eye.

"'There was a gas lamp on the corner. They knew me by my face.

"' "Are you going to deal flagstones with your feet?" asks one of them.

"'Let's pull down the blinds. It was their

whirl at the bat. They brought all the folks, includin' the old man and Tommy the cop.

"'They yee-hooed on my feet till I had to holler for mercy. Then they sat on the curb and rocked and hollered like the pack of fools they were. They tried to lift my shoulders up, but found that my coat had took a violent affection for the sidewalk, too. Some of 'em didn't even try for the curbstone then. They rolled around on the sidewalk and kicked their legs, whilst I frayed my vocal chords readin' their customs and habits to 'em.

"'But I was in a runnin' noose; the harder I cussed at 'em, the worse they laughed.

"'"Ain't he the slick one, though!" says the old man, holdin' on to his stummick with both hands. "Don't do nothin' more to him for a minute, boys, or the coroner'll be sittin' on me."

"'Every time I gee-nashed my teeth an' tried to reach 'em they waltzed on one leg and

shrieked. There must 'a' been nigh three hundred fools watchin' and havin' the time of their lives. Little messenger-boys was there, the night-watchmen took a peep, ladies with a past improved a shinin' present, the dago shoeblacks heard the racket and come runnin' up and hollered, "Choon-gum extract! Ten a cent!"

" 'And there I lay, flat on my back, with my knees in the air, scart to move, because I couldn't wiggle a finger without the crowd throwin' a fit. Oh, murder! Le's cut it! They unlaced my shoes and snaked me out of my coat, and instead of bein' sad at them pathetical shoes and coat lying in the coal-tar, the boss fell over sideways and the rest was too feeble to stop me as I broke away. I made that block in two stocking-footed leps.

" 'I had a hundred or two in my pants. I bought three dollars' worth of coat and shoes from a second-hand store for fifteen dollars

and a promise that if anything happened I wouldn't mention the shop to the police. Then I come here, far from the gadding crowds, far from the lady with the developed jaw-swing, and I get—that.'

"Here," said Mr. Scraggs, "he p'inted to my chewin'-gum and wiped his white brow off with his white handkercher, and he says: 'Have we come to this?'

"I swallered hard and looked at him.

" 'Have you such a thing as a plug of ter-backker in your possession?'

" 'Yes,' says he, surprised. 'I have.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'ruther than to further add to your troubles, I'll break my word to a lady —gimme that plug! We haven't come to this —this has come to us.'

"So I explained, and he opened his stock exchange. I reckon he was right about the bad effects of chewin'-gum, too, or maybe what's a medal winner in N' York ain't art

west of the Missouri. Anyhow, you don't hear me kickin' about that nice missionary young lady. If I cared for joolry, I'd be wearin' that tin-horn's diamon' chest protector right now. Gum has different effects on different people. 'Twas fatal to his constitooshun."

XI

BLESSED BE THE PEACEMAKERS

THE QUEST FOR QUIET ON THE PART OF THE HUMAN CONCERTINA

"THE peaceful season has come around again," said Mr. Scraggs. "It does that every year. It is a good thing to have a certain date to be peaceful on; you prepare for it, put all troublesome things away, and wind up, as I usually do, with four friends trying to hold me down because I feel so light in the head.

"Peace is one of the finest things on earth, but the makin' of it will never be confined to one of these here monopolies. Listen! What better could a man do than go into a home being tore wide open by the dissensions and discussions of one husband and one wife,

using such domestic articles as flat-irons, coal-scuttles, brooms and the like of that, upon each other, and extract from the dust one large, smooth, round, white hunk of peace? It is nice to think of.

"I remember Long John. He was a feller built on the concertina plan. When he sat down in a chair he didn't look like a man more'n seven feet high, but when he got up, and up, and more up, he was that kind of build that made little Bill holler, the first time he saw the ack, 'How much more of you is there down cellar?' And Bill said to me on the quiet: 'Old Gabe will have to play an oncore if he expects John to get up before the resurrection is all over.'

"But John had a disposition that couldn't be beat. He was for peace all the time. Bits of men that wouldn't more'n come up to his waist used to talk to him as rough as they liked

and John wouldn't give them one word back. He simply hit them a slam, and then there was peace, you bet your life.

"But it was done out of pure good-natur. 'They got no business to talk like that to nobody,' says John, 'and I can correc' them without it looking anything like a fight. Ain't you noticed that that stops 'em from being sassy?' It sure did, but I lived in fear and tremblin' some feller would be an inch nearer than John cal'lated and would remain quiet for several million years. That would have broke his heart.

"Well, John put in a solid eight months without ever pinting a foot toward town. Then he collected and went off for a little quiet trip on his own hook. He said that nobody could ask for a better people than we were, yet we was kind of rough in our ways, and he wanted to see domestic felicity, and the soothing inflooence of Woman. That there

was a strain in his ideas that made him need kind and gentle treatment oncet in so often.

"It ain't, perhaps, necessary for me to say that I have been exposed to the inflooence of seventy or eighty Mrs. Scraggs for enough number of years to heave a sigh on what was comin' to John; but I never guessed how complete his whole idea of the way this universe runs would be ruined.

"Off goes Johnny Boy, dressed up in his best black suit, that looked as if it had been made for a statue of a life-sized giant. The sleeves hung down to the middle of his fingers, the pants rolled up six inches at the bottom, and, as he was a ga'nt critter, there was enough stuff in them clothes to make it look as if he could turn right around inside them without attracting attention.

"And he come back.

"This is what happened. He come into the bull-pen slower than usual. He sat down on

the bunk, with his face completely surrounded by hands, and he never opened his yorp till long after we'd et our supper. Then he took me by the arm, and says, 'Scraggsy, you been my friend for a long time. Come out till I tell you something.'

"I went out and he smoked his cigareet for another half-hour until I had to say: 'If you have got anything real to tell me, John, why don't you do it to-night, while we're sitting out here so comfortable in the frost?'

"Says he: 'I got up there all right. It was a nice town. There was swimming. There was peace. There was sidewalks, and fellers wearing strange hats. Everything was there, and I think,' he says, 'I was more scared of the things I didn't know whether they could happen or not than I was of the things I knew could happen.

" 'My soul had all the fuz roped off of it. I was positive I would never more take two

wraps around a cayuse with them legs of mine, and chase a skitty steer some more. "No," says I, "cow-punching is a lost art." A feller gets all broke up and tackled with rheumatism before he's—he's—well, I ain't sixty yet, by a durn sight. Anyhow, a feller gets broke up any time, and I think of those lovely homes and nice beds, and it seemed great.

"'The gent behind the counter of the hotel shoved a book and a pen at me. I looked at 'em, wonderin' if it was an autograft album. The little gals uster have 'em when I was young, and you put your John Hancock down and then something about the rose is red and the violets blue—I forget the rest.

"'I felt queer. It didn't seem like a man of my size oughter be writing sich sentiments in a large book with lots of people looking on.

"'Howsumever, I done it, and the clerk says to me, "You come from the playful districts, just outlying the land of fun, don't you?" and

he added that too much gayety weren't a good thing.

"'He came to about ten words about it, when I took the flat of my hand and patted him on the back of his head. His nose bled all over the book, and everybody seemed to think there was a kick comin'.

"'At last they showed me where I was wrong, and instead of fussing around that pesky hotel, I spent the night in a calaboose. It was one of the pleasantest little jails I ever inhabited—airy, kind of roomy, when I lay on the floor with my head in one corner and my feet in the other—but, toward morning, I got restless and horrible hungry. I hadn't et the night before, forgetting my supper in the fuss they made about that autograft album, so I shoved my bird-cage door off its hinges and started for grub.

"'I come upon the jailer eating his midnight meal—pie, cake, eggs—everything. He

looked at me and reached for his gun. I took hold of him and reached for his lunch. I et that lunch and gave him one iron dollar, handed him the door, and said, "You keep this, so you don't work any racket on me stealing your property; or, if you like, I will walk around town with it and you can swear your affidavit that I am still behind the jail door—if you only stand in front of me and look."

"'He was a nervous kind of critter that wasn't fit to take care of a bunch of sheep, let alone running a jail. Couldn't get anything out of him. He was excited, so I spread them bars on the door apart, stuck his head in, let them snap back on his neck and sung him, *Come, Birdie, Come and Live With Me!*

"'He certainly was a comic-looking jailer, sitting back there with his head peeking through the door. The other fellers in there laughed to beat anything, and wanted me to

cut 'em loose, but I couldn't do that—havin' come to the town for peace and quiet.

" 'Howsumever, I recovered the goods they took from me, and fed the boys a little out of the thimbleful of high jumps I carried in my behind pocket, until everybody was singing, dancing jigs, and so happy that it did sure look like a little bird-cage filled with the merriest chirpers that ever teetered on a limb.

" 'Come daybreak, I says good-by to the crowd and started out to see the city. I turned into the business district, but the stores wasn't open yet, so I naturally meandered anywheres my fancy led me.

" 'Some of them nice houses were sending up a curl of smoke for early breakfast, and some of them was tight shut, where the fellers that led easy lives weren't up yet, but was sleeping peacefully in security, and I felt overlonesome. Seemed like I hadn't got what was coming to me, that I couldn't have a little

shack with red roses on it, and some nice, kind woman—that would think a durn sight more of me than I was wuth—to keep my feet out of the drafts for the rest of my days.

" 'It was a purty sunrise. It ketched holt of the trees, it scattered red on the window-panes. The chickens was crowin' and cacklin' around. The dogs come out and give me a wet wallop on the back of my hand, or chased after me till I had to send them home. And the cats was sitting up on top of the fence-posts waiting for a friendly scratch on the back, and I did feel my life was wasted.

" 'So I hiked out of that to a hill I see in the distance to think things over, and they was more'n plenty. Shaking my head to myself and thinking of what I had lost, I happened to look at my watch and found out I had near lost my lunch, for one thing; so I did the turn back to town at a good, easy lope.

" 'Them young ladies that waited on the

table took care of me in good shape. They called me "Grandpaw," but it weren't in no way sassy, and I give 'em a five-dollar gold-piece to get some of the green, blue, red and yeller flyabout things that gals like; and the men they was nice and polite to me, too, till, by and by, here comes a committee of five to wait on me, and explain I should oughter go back to jail.

"'Again it looked as if I should have to subdue some trouble, but only a minute. I showed them that the finish of their jail was ineveetible, if they kept sticking a man in who was bound and determined to carry off a hunk of their jail every time he wanted to come out again; and, more'n that, would feel it his bounden duty to shoot, and would shoot, and, as a matter of fact, *did* shoot a hole through the hat of the most pushin' of the crowd; and I simply says: "Instead of all this fuss and fiddle about nothing except them sentiments I

wrote in your hotel-book, which seem to displease you, let us have a little treat."

" 'It is no use talking, there is plenty of good in everybody. We had that little treat, and they found out who I was, and, by-and-by, one feller says: "We have got you noosed as an inhabitant of this here town. Don't you try to break away, but remember you have got your picket-pin in your own hands. Turn yourself loose, and please us all the more." So that day was right pleasant and cheerful.

" 'The town paper come out with a notice that the eminent citizen, "Long John," alias "Texas Brown," alias "Whipsaw Brown," alias "Johnny-on-the-seven-spot Brown," had been overtaken by the town of Abraham Lincoln, and that for the present the map of said town contained him as its most important business center.

" 'The shops all shut up, and that town and me had a fly through space together that the

citizens won't forget for several weeks. But when I woke next morning, I says to myself: "This looks like the same old thing, whilst I came here hunting for peaceful domestic joys."

" 'So I got up in the cool of the morning with scarcely a pain in my head, and sails out to more retiring districts.

" 'I saw before me the nicest little house you ever did see. There was all kinds of posies in front of it; its fence was as shiny as a set of false teeth; the grass was cut short and tidy. It weren't painted too many colors. In fact, it was just right, and feelin' poetic, I said aloud: "O happiness, here's where thou hast planted thy stakes. Inside this small claim, with all its tips, spurs, angles and variations, there sure runs a pasture of high-grade, free millin' "—but I got no further, for from out that shell that looked so good to me there come a yell like as if a mounting-lion had switched

his tail into a wolf-trap. A sound of breaking furniture come to my ears. Also, something as if a man was cussin' from the very inside of his heart outward, and I gathered that a lady was either being beat by her husband, or else was beating her husband. Of course, in the former case, I was bound to interfere, not knowin' the rules of married life.

" 'I waved my right foot in the air and slipped the door off its hinges, and there appeared before me sich a scene as I never would suppose could appear before anybody in a house with posies in front of it, and vines crawling over it, and sich nice, clean winders.

" 'The lady, who was a stout-built female something under six feet, had a little dark-complected man under the crook of her arm, and whilst she spanked him with the stove-lid she hollered "Help!" and "Murder!" That poor little—I mean to say, that scoundrel—had kicked over most of the truck that was

movable, the cat and dog was gobblin' what would have been breakfast if this unhappy dispute hadn't come about, and they was growling and snapping and spitting, too.

" 'There weren't no peace about it.

" 'Just as my eyes got used to this, the little man made a violent effort, caught the lady by one foot, and pushed. She lost her balance and fell agin the crockery-box. That lost its balance and fell on both of them. All I could see was two pair of feet. Nothing could be more painful than to see a lady covered with crockery and a large closet.

" 'I got in front to straighten things up again, and the gentleman bit me in the leg. I called "Peace!" to him, but he didn't care. Then I got the thing half-straightened up—you will notice by this lump under my right ear where the lady took me one with the stove-lid.

" 'I kept right on with the good work, and,

"Don't you dast touch my husband!" says she. Page 253

although it seems onreasonable to the untutored, and yet absolutely necessary under the conditions, I put one foot on the lady and pulled as much as I could of the gent away from her.

" 'Something whizzed over my head and took my brand-new Stetson right along with it into the fire that the upset cook-stove had started. My foot slipped on a piece of pertater, and I come down right in the middle of domestic bliss. The lady wrapped one hand in my hair, and hit me with the other fair hand that weighed about eight pounds.

" ' "Don't you dast touch my husband!" says she. "You big brute, what do you mean?"

" ' "Ma'am," says I, kind of jerky—for the little dark-complected feller had squirmed loose and was basting me with a section of stove-pipe, accusing me of striking his wife—"ma'am," I says, "I don't hardly reckon you are doing the right thing by me. I only

wanted to keep you from harm"—and them was my last words.

" 'My good intentions had soured on their stomachs. The pair of them done more things with me in one-half minute than a monkey could think of in one-half a month. Most of my scratches and eighty per cent. of the cuts is healed. They spoiled that bed of posies by dragging me over them, and I put the fence a little out of plumb by trying to regain some of the dignity that ought naturally to belong to a man. That is to say, I took hold of the fence and tried to stand up, but me and two of the pickets hit the middle of the road. I carried those pickets with me just because I was dazed.

" 'I turned up at the hotel still holdin' 'em, and all the male citizens there assembled expressed their surprise in one voice. Them nice waiter-ladies got rags and things, and patched me up the best they could. The hotel

man loaned me two drinks, and it seemed as if somewhere in the back part of me, where the real "Long John Brown" had took to the brush during the scrimmage, there was a stir, and by-and-by I come to.

" 'Immejitely I whooped up them steps to my room, packed my grip and come down front again. I ain't braggarty a bit when I say them people was sorry to see me go, and coaxed me to try another whirl.

" 'They almost had me, when down the street in the distance here come that fine-built, up-standing female and the little dark-complected man, and I heard the woman holler to a neighbor that they was out to catch an eight-foot-high, bow-legged critter, with hair and whiskers like a billy-goat, that had broke into their house without cause or reason, smashed all the crockery, knocked the stove into junk and inflicted upon their persons some injuries they could show, and some they wouldn't.

" 'I turned to the crowd at the bar, and says, "That is the piece of beautiful domestic life I tried to help. Are you fellers now goin' to stand for me?"—and them fellers put down their glasses, and walked so fast they got jabbed in the doorway, lightin' out of that.

" 'One lad says to me, "You know I'm your friend, but—"

" ' "Yes," I says, "I know you are my friend, and you know that nothing could hurt my feelings worse than to see a friend of mine get hurt, so you are putting out where it ain't likely to happen."

" ' "Yes," he says, kind of hurried. "That's it. That lady's run for mayor of this town twice without anybody asking her, or saying anything about it. She's elected herself twice, only casting one vote. We keep the City Hall doors locked all the time. I meant to tell you that the town wasn't really run. She is, you

might say, a determined character," and, he says, in a greater hurry yet, "Good-by."

" 'The barkeeper had took down cellar, so I says "Good-by" to my reflection in the look-in'-glass and skipped out the back way, behind barns and sheds and barrels, so that lady couldn't see me, and hid in an empty coal-bin at the station until it come time for my train, and here I be,' says John. 'Here I be, Scraggsy, old man; and, while I ain't in no way convinced but what domestic felicity is the one thing on earth, yet I wish I hadn't been so biggoty, and had asked you a few facts concerning the female species before I started to put my notions into practice.'

" 'Goin' to stay quiet on the ranch now?' I asked him.

"He rolled a cigareet with determination, and he answers, 'Mebbe,' and the only other words I heard from him was when he stepped

on a shoe in his bare feet and come down on some place that was sore from the kind attentions of his lady friend, and he strangled for three minutes, gritting his teeth so I could hear 'em squeak in the darkness, and then he says:

"'Blessed be the peacemakers!'"

THE END

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